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# CULTURE AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF KASHMIR

## Volume Two MEDIEVAL KASHMIR

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THE SULTANATE  
[1339—1586]  
MUGHAL RULE  
[1586—1753]  
AFGHAN SATRAPY  
[1753—1819]  
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## FOUNDATION OF THE SULTANATE

**T**he rise of Islam is a marvel of history. Born in the beginning of the seventh century AD it enveloped, a century later, a vast stretch of territory extending from the Atlantic to the Indus and from the Caspian to the Cataracts of the Nile, including Spain and Portugal, some of the most fertile regions of France, the whole of the northern coast of Africa, Upper and Lower Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Transoxiana.

By the beginning of the eighth century of the Christian era the Arabs had carried their arms as far as the western confines of India and bore sway in Makaran. Simultaneously they brought under their rule the whole of Central Asia, threatening the empire of China from there and penetrating to the kingdom of Kabul.

### Early Contact with Islam

Geographically situated as it was, Kashmir did not fall in their line of advance, but we find that during the reign of Karkota dynasty of Kashmir. The Arabs were becoming a source of serious menace to the Kashmir kingdom. First Chandrapida and then the great king Lalitaditya, through their embassy to the Chinese court asked for aid from the Celestial Emperor and proposed an alliance against the rising power of the Arabs. During his numerous campaigns in Central Asia, Afghanistan and in Western India, Lalitaditya and his army definitely came across and clashed with the armies of the Arabs and had thus an opportunity of coming in contact with the followers of the new faith.

In India the province of Sind was the first to experience the impact of Islam through Muhammad Bin Qasim's expedition. Bin Qasim defeated the ruler of Sind, Dahir, whose sway extended to the borders of Kashmir. We learn from an original source, the *Chach Nama*, that Bin

Qasim had proceeded from Multan to the frontiers of Kashmir and at the same time sent an expedition to Kanauj. But here he met with little success.

Bin Qasim's rule was thus short-lived and the Arabs left the shores of India without founding a kingdom. Surprise has often been felt why the Arabs stopped merely at the gates of India, and even failed to retain what they had conquered. One of the chief reasons, according to Majumdar, was the check they received in their onward progress at the hands of the imperial forces of Lalitaditya who having conquered Malwa and Gujrat, defeated the Arab forces advancing under the energetic governor Junaid, somewhere near the borders of Kashmir which extended to Western India. He sent an embassy to China for making common cause against the Arabs, but though no help was forthcoming from that quarter, he was able to defeat the Arabs by his own unaided efforts.<sup>1</sup>

Even though driven out of Sind, the Arabs established economic supremacy in the entire Arab belt, which enabled them to survive all internal upheavals including the Shia-Sunni divide and the sack of Baghdad in 1258 AD. But when in 1498 Vasco de Gama, discovered a new route to India, the Arab expansion was on the retreat.

The story of the spread of Islam in India from the north is different. The Arabs never carried the standard of this religion far beyond the Indus, and though the doctrine of the new faith was accepted by many, it had lost its political unity, and the control of its "destinies had passed from the hands of the Arabian successors of Muhammad into those of independent dynasties acknowledging the Caliph at Baghdad merely as a spiritual head."

#### *Mahmud's Invasion*

In the early part of the tenth century the descendants of Saman, a Persian chieftain of Balkh who had accepted Islam, extended their dominion over Transoxiana, Persia and the greater part of the present kingdom of Afghanistan, but their great empire waned almost as rapidly as it had waxed and their power gradually passed into the hands of the Turkish slaves to whom they had been wont to entrust the duties of the State. It fell to the lot of one of the successors of these slave kings, Mahmud Ghazni, to prepare the ground for a Muslim kingdom in the northern and subsequently in western India.

Ghazni's several invasions of India are well known to every

student of Indian history. Kashmir at that time, internally weakened and being thus an easy and inviting prey to the rising tide of the Islamic forces, reverted under hostile circumstances, to a policy of exclusiveness and thoroughly sealed its frontiers. Says Alberuni:

"They are particularly anxious about the natural strength of the country and, therefore, take always much care to keep a strong hold upon the entrances and roads leading into it. In consequence, it is very difficult to have any commerce with them. In former times, they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country, particularly Jews, but at present do not allow any Hindu whom they do not know personally to enter, much less other people."

It is easy to shut out armies and men, but ideas and cultural ferments have, all along the course of world history, proved too strong for any artificial barriers. The fact that Alberuni without having visited the Valley personally, was capable of giving exact details of its geography, shows that he must have come in contact with a few learned Pandits of Kashmir who "in old days, as at present, were accustomed to leave their homes for distant places, wherever their learning could secure for them a livelihood." He is also responsible for the statement that due to the rapacities of Ghazni most of the learned Brahmins of Northern India fled to Kashmir, which must have enormously influenced the cultural growth of the Valley and also brought in some elementary ideas about Islam and the Prophet.

Kashmir had a special reason to attract the attention of Ghazni and his armies. From ancient times Gandhara or north-western frontier of India, had forged strong political and cultural ties with Kashmir and laterly when Kabul and its dependencies passed into the hands of the Hindu Sahiya dynasty under Lalliya, a Brahmin, who overthrew the last of the Turki Sahiya kings — the offshoots of the Kusans — the rulers of the two kingdoms entered into matrimonial relations among themselves. When the Sahiya kingdom under Jaipala received the first onslaught of Ghazni's forces, he looked for, and received, aid from his friend and kinsman, the then ruler of Kashmir. The last of the Sahiyas, Trilochanpala, though aided by the Kashmir king Samgramaraja (1003-28 AD) was finally defeated by the forces of Ghazni and Kalhana devotes a good number of stanzas in his famous *Rajatarangini* to lament the fall of that great kingdom. Trilochanpala made some more feeble attempts to regain his throne and kingdom but met with no success.

After the final destruction of the Sahiya kingdom and the dispersal

1. Majumdar, *The Classical Age*, p. 174.

of its great army, the way was opened for a raid into India and Mahmud marched to the fortress of Nagarkot in Kangra which he occupied without much opposition. The independent Hindu kingdom of Kashmir was a thorn in his side and he made up his mind to reduce it during one of his subsequent invasions. In 1015 AD he invaded Kashmir via the Tosa-maidan Pass and invested Lohkot or Loharkot, a strong fortress on the outskirts of the Valley. But thanks to the dogged resistance offered by Kashmiris and the inaccessibility of the mountain paths, he had to retire in ignominy. The great secret of his success against the forces of Sahiyas had been his redoubtable cavalry which, though effective in the plains, could not be deployed advantageously in inaccessible and difficult mountain paths. The siege of the fortress continued for two months, but on seeing that the weather was becoming unfavourable and that the Kashmiris were receiving fresh reinforcements every day, he raised the siege and retired. "This was his first serious reverse in India. His army lost its way in the unfamiliar highlands and its retreat was interrupted by flooded valleys, but at length after much toil it debouched into the open country and returned to Ghazni in disorder."<sup>2</sup>

In 1021 Mahmud, to regain his lost prestige, again invaded Kashmir by the same route. But again the fortress of Lohkot stood in his way. After an unsuccessful siege which lasted a month, snow began to fall and fearing the destruction of his forces as in the previous invasion Mahmud gave up the attempt at its reduction and withdrew. This convinced him of the impregnable strength of the Kashmir kingdom, and he abandoned the idea of invading Kashmir again.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Penetration from the North*

It was from another quarter that Kashmir faced the threat of the advancing forces of the new faith. Towards the north, in Central Asia, the Muhammadanised Turks were becoming more aggressive and were seeking new fields for their activities. A small force of these Muslim Turks under their leader, Salara Vismaya, appears to have extended its influence to the outskirts of the Valley during the troubled days of the civil war between Sussala and Bhiksacara (12th century AD) and the latter invited their aid in an attack on Lohara, the seat of Sussala. Earlier, during the reign of Harsa (1038-89), we come across the Turuska (Turkish) captains employed in his army and enjoying

2. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III, p. 18.

3. Nazim, *Mahmud of Ghazni*, pp. 104-105.

his favour. Harsa himself seems to have been influenced by the teachings of Islam which denounced idolatory and his destruction of temples and images evoked resentment in Kalhana who gives him the epithet of "Turuska", that is, Muhammadan. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller, also refers to the presence of Muslims in Kashmir about 1277 AD. Meanwhile on its outskirts the conversion of Darada tribes on the Indus was making rapid progress.

It can safely be deduced from the above that Islamic influence was making itself felt in Kashmir long before the country had a Muslim king. Islamic missionaries and adventurers came into Kashmir and preached the doctrine among the people who were thoroughly saturated with the tenets of Brahmanism and Buddhism. The preachings of the first missionaries do not seem to have produced any deep impression and it required all the religious fervour and devotion of selfless divines and dervishes like Bulbul Shah to convince the Kashmiri people and convert them to the creed and philosophy of the new religion.

#### *Conditions Favourable to Islam*

The propagation of the new creed was greatly facilitated by the internal feuds and strifes among the rulers and the powerful landlords. It is but natural that under such chaotic political conditions the fate of the common man was all but happy. He had to suffer from the rapacities of the agents of the king as well as those of the lords. His land remained uncultivated, he could not safely conduct his business and his very life was crushed out of him. Added to these were the natural calamities that came in quick succession, famines, earthquakes and fires, which further reduced him to an abject position. Any departure, therefore, from his traditional but out-dated social customs and political set-up, which even in a small measure restored his confidence, was welcome to him. The contacts established by the Muslim soldiers and adventurers among the general population, must have resulted in a good number of converts, seeing that Islam offered them a square deal and freedom from the oppressive rites and rituals.

The name associated with the earliest propagation of Islam in Kashmir is that of Bulbul Shah who is said to have visited Kashmir first in the time of Raja Sahadeva. He was a widely travelled Musavi Syed from Turkistan having enjoyed a long stay at Baghdad. He was the disciple of Shah Niamat Ullah Farsi of the Suhrawardi school of Sufis. Being a devout Sufi he cast an enormous influence on the people amongst whom he worked and lived a life of complete self-abnegation.

And it was due to him that Kashmir came under the rule of the first Muslim king — Rinchin.

### Rinchin (1320-23 AD)

The life of Rinchin, the Tibetan, is as adventurous as it is interesting. Originally a prince of Ladakh, Rinchin had to flee for safety after a battle with the Baltis who had earlier killed his father. Though he had avenged his father's death by killing a number of Balti chiefs, his position in Ladakh became precarious and together with a number of his followers, he came to Kashmir and was given protection by Ramachandra, the commander-in-chief of the then king, Sahadeva. Meanwhile Ramachandra who appears to have been a hospitable person, had taken under his service and protection another man, Shah Mir, a Muslim adventurer from Swat.

At this time Kashmir witnessed an unprecedented orgy of loot, arson, murder and rape at the hands of an unscrupulous and cruel invader, Dulchu, a Tartar chief from Turkistan, ruled at the time by the descendants of Chaghtay, the son of Ghenghis Khan. Dulchu's army of 60,000 mounted troops consisted of Turks and Mongols. Entering the Valley over the Jhelum valley route, he did not meet any effective opposition, but on the other hand king Sahadeva offered him a large present of money raised by taxing his subjects including Brahmins, in the hope that the invader would turn back. But this had a contrary effect. The rapacious Dulchu's appetite for gold was whetted and he ordered the march on the capital. Sahadeva fled to Kishtwar leaving the affairs of the State in the hands of Ramachandra.

Rinchin and Shah Mir together with their followers came to the aid of the Kashmiris and did their bit in opposing the unscrupulous and cruel invader. But it was all in vain. The towns were heaps of ruins, the land was depopulated, the armies were dispersed, the fortresses taken by storm. Kashmir was a rich land, offering abundant scope for plunder; but what would happen after that? Impoverishing the Valley during a stay of eight months, Dulchu, finding that provisions were scarce, tried to get out by the southern passes, but he could not escape Nature's wrath. Snow overtook him and his whole army together with thousands of male and female prisoners perished. Then the Gaddis from Kishtwar entered the Valley on a raiding expedition but were driven back by Ramchandra who now assumed the title of king.

Rinchin who had gained the goodwill of the people now became more ambitious. Finding that he had no chances against Ramachandra in an open fight he resorted to a mean stratagem. He sent his Tibetan followers, disguised as simple pedlars, into the inner precincts of the palace. When all suspicion had been removed he and his followers with arms concealed under their long robes, entered Ramachandra's quarters and before his guards could come to his help, murdered him in cold blood. Proclaiming himself king he, in order to wipe off all opposition, married Ramachandra's daughter, Kota, and also appointed his son Ravanchandra as his prime minister and later as the governor of the Pargana of Lar.<sup>4</sup>

Having usurped the throne he wanted further to strengthen his position by adopting the religion of his subjects. Calling Shri Devaswami, the religious and spiritual head of the Saivas, he begged him, in all humility to admit him to the Hindu fold.

The Pandits held a solemn conclave, at the end of which they, with one voice, refused him the privilege of calling himself a Hindu. "But why?" asked Rinchin. Simply because the caste of his birth was doubtful, was the answer. Disappointed and disgraced he passed a restless night. Was there no spiritual solace for him? Suddenly, in the early hours of the morning, he was roused from his disturbed sleep by the sharp and loud voice of the Muazin. "There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet." Looking out of the window he observed the devout Bulbul Shah at prayer. He went to his presence. Could he admit him to his creed? Could he satisfy his spiritual hunger? Bulbul Shah comforted him and told him to have faith in God and the Prophet. Rinchin was thus admitted to Islam and became the first Muslim king of Kashmir.

Thus exactly 305 years after Mahmud Ghazni's unsuccessful invasion, Islam attained the status of State religion in Kashmir. But so imperceptible was the change that it

"did neither affect the independence of the country nor at first materially change its political and cultural condition. The administration remained as before in the hands of the traditional official class, the Brahmins, for whom a change of religion presented no advantage and who accordingly retained their inherited status, together with its literary traditions. Sanskrit remained for a considerable period after the end of Hindu rule the medium of official communication and record in Kashmir as shown by the

4. Dutt, *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 29.

*Lokaprakasha*. The manifold forms for official documents, reports, etc., which are contained in this remarkable handbook of Kashmirian administrative routine, are drawn up in a curious Sanskrit jargon full of Persian and Arabic words which must have become current in Kashmir soon after the introduction of Islam."<sup>5</sup>

#### *A Strong Administrator*

Bearing no rancour towards the Hindus, Rinchin applied his energies to alleviate the sufferings of the people after the terrible invasion of Dulchu. "The country", says Jonaraja, "was weary of trouble and disorder, and Shree Rinchin gave it rest under the shelter of his arm. When the dark days disappeared, the people of Kashmir witnessed again all the festivities which they had beheld under their former kings".<sup>6</sup>

It appears that the Lavanyas, the professional soldiers, were inflicting untold miseries on the people and the previous kings had been unable to suppress them and put them under proper discipline. Rinchin curbed their propensities for loot and murder and also sowed seeds of disunity amongst them, thus weakening them further. The king and the people were left in peace and "like the birds in the sky the king roamed easily in that thorny wood where even the God of love had become bewildered."<sup>7</sup>

Rinchin ruled with a firm but just hand. He dispensed justice impartially. The chronicler mentions the instance of the son of a powerful lord, named Timi, who had forcibly taken milk from a maid and drank it. The milkwoman instantly complained to the king who, in order to set an example of it, ordered his belly to be cut open and lo! the milk flowed out from his stomach. Another story of his wise handling of a case is mentioned. While left to graze in the mountains the mare of a peasant gave birth to a foal, which was nursed by another mare whose foal had died a few days earlier. When the mares were brought to the village, a dispute ensued as to the ownership of the foal. Each claimed it to be the offspring of his mare. The king took the mares and the foal in a boat to the middle of the lake and pushed out the foal into the water. The real mother jumped after him and thus the riddle was resolved.

Rinchin founded a town after his name and built a hospice for Bulbul Shah, his spiritual guide. He endowed the hospice and the free kitchen for the poor with the revenue collections from several villages.

5. Stein, Trans. of *Rajatarangini*, Vol. I, p. 130.

6. Dutt, *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 19.

7. Ibid., p. 19.

The mosque and the hospice were later destroyed by a fire and a smaller mosque was built at the place.

Notwithstanding his great qualities as an administrator, the king was not left in peace. A rebellion was raised by some disgruntled feudal lords headed by Tuka, his former prime minister. Through his courage and presence of mind he succeeded in putting it down, but in the skirmish, he received a severe wound on his head. The wound would not heal and after a few months of painful existence he died of it, having ruled for a brief period of over three years. Before his death he left his son and wife, Kota Rani, to the care of Shah Mir who having remained loyal to him throughout, had risen to the position of chief minister.

After the death of Rinchin, his son, Haider, who was an infant, did not succeed him, but instead Kota Rani and Shah Mir invited Udyanadeva, the brother of Sahadeva, who ruled the country for 15 years. He married Rinchin's widow, who became the *de facto* ruler of Kashmir. "She was, as it were, the mind, and the king, the body who carried out her order."<sup>8</sup>

#### *Udyanadeva (1323-38)*

It was during his time that Kashmir suffered from another invader, Achala, a Turkish leader who entered the Valley by the Pir Panjal route laying waste the places he passed through. Like his brother, Udyanadeva too was a weakling and at the first sign of the approaching invader he fled to Ladakh. Queen Kota with very little provisions left for her troops and being at the head of a house divided against itself, realised that she had absolutely no chance of making a successful resistance to the ferocious and greedy troops of Achala. Feigning submission she sent word to him that as the throne of Kashmir had fallen vacant due to the king's flight she and her ministers would be only too glad to instal him on the throne provided he sent his and his ally's troops back. Achala, blinded by avarice, believed her word and keeping only a detachment with him in Kashmir sent the rest of his troops back home. Then Kota broke her word, attacked and destroyed the detachment and capturing Achala had him publicly beheaded. Udyanadeva finding that he had nobody to be afraid of, returned; but to all intents and purposes the kingdom was ruled by the versatile queen.

During Achala's invasion, Shah Mir played a hero's part. He did

8. Ibid., p. 24.

his best to organise the slender forces of the kingdom and came to the succour of the people at a time of national emergency. He and his Kashmiri followers inflicted crushing blows on the invader. For this and his other acts of charity, grace and good organisation he became the idol of the people. This invited the king's jealousy. But Shah Mir received tacit support from queen Kota due to his being the guardian of her son, Haider. Reduced to the position of a puppet, the king spent his last days in prayer and passed away quietly on Shivaratri night in the year 1338 AD.

### **Kota Rani (1338-39)**

The death of the king was the signal for a struggle for power between the queen and Shah Mir. Kota Rani fearing the latter's popularity kept the fact of the king's demise a secret for four days, hoping to gain time to entrench herself. For some time things moved on calmly, but the queen wanting to have Shah Mir superseded showed favour to Bhiksana Bhatta, the guardian of her second son. Shah Mir cleverly managed a stratagem and getting hold of him unawares murdered him in cold blood. This enraged the queen and in order to avenge him she ordered her forces to besiege Shah Mir's house. The clever Mir so manoeuvred his forces that the tables were turned on queen Kota herself and she was in turn besieged in her own palace. Her forces were dispersed and she fell a prisoner into his hands. Shah Mir forced her to marry him but while entering his bedchamber she committed suicide. Thus ended the life of one of the most romantic figures in the history of Kashmir.

### **Sultan Shams-ud-Din (1339-42)**

Shah Mir who now ascended the throne under the name of Sultan Shams-ud-din, is the founder of the Sultan dynasty whose kings ruled Kashmir for 222 years. This period is important in the long annals of Kashmir in as much as Islam was firmly planted on its soil and the country and its people acquired an ascendancy in art and literature during the reign of one of the most illustrious sovereigns of this dynasty — Zain-ul-abidin. This period acquires importance also on account of the rise of the popular Kashmiri language through which great saints and poets like Lalleswari and Nund Rishi expounded their philosophy. The introduction of the Shia religion by Mir Shams-ud-din Iraqi is also important. The official routine of the government was carried on in

the Sanskrit language for at least one century after the accession of Shah Mir to the throne till under Zain-ul-abidin it was changed to Persian. The Persian and Arabic artistic and cultural influences penetrated into Kashmir during this period resulting in a synthesis of Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu cultures.

Sultan Shams-ud-din conducted the affairs of the State in a wise and statesman-like manner. The Kingdom had been torn by the ravages of Dulchu and Achala and the first need of the people was complete peace. Shah Mir saw to it that the people enjoyed this blessing and the Chronicler mentions that the king "assuaged the troubles of Kashmir and changed its condition."

The later Hindu kings had been atrocious tyrants, whose avowed policy had been to leave to their subjects nothing beyond a bare subsistence. He ruled on more liberal principles, abolished the arbitrary taxes and the cruel methods of extorting them, and fixed the State's share of produce at one-sixth.

Kishtwar which may rightly be called a side-valley of Kashmir had been the source of trouble for him. The Lon or Lavanya tribe, the turbulent military caste, still following the Hindu religion raised a rebellion against Shah Mir. It has already been noted that these Lavanyas were the adherents of queen Kota. Shah Mir sent a strong force against them and though pressed hard was able to suppress them completely.

During his short reign of three years Shah Mir endeared himself to the people. He had already spent the major portion of his life amongst the Kashmiris and throughout had shared their joys and sorrows. His death naturally caused a great deal of grief amongst his subjects.

Shah Mir had four sons, Jamshid, Ali Sher, Shirsamaq and Hindal. The eldest succeeded him but reigned for no more than a year being dethroned in 1343 AD by his next brother, Ali Sher, who ascended the throne under the title of Alau-ud-din.

### **Sultan Alau-ud-Din (1343-54)**

Alau-ud-din's reign which lasted for 11 years (1343-54 AD) was mainly spent in repairing the ravages caused by the heartless invaders, Dulchu and Achala. During the second year of his rule a severe famine occurred in Kashmir and be it said to his credit, he left no stone unturned in alleviating the sufferings of the people. His reign is also outstanding



for his building a huge *serai*, or resting place, for travellers from Central Asia, which shows the close commercial ties with the Central Asian kingdoms of those days. The king also built a small town in the vicinity of Srinagar called Alau-ud-dinpura and a palace therein. The Sultan died in the year 1354 leaving two sons, the eldest of whom succeeded the throne under the name of Sultan Shihab-ud-din.

### Sultan Shihab-ud-Din (1354-73)

Shihab-ud-din may rightly be called the Lalitaditya of medieval Kashmir. During his time Kashmir armies marched to distant places in India and Afghanistan flying victorious banners and raising the prestige of their arms. It goes to the credit of Shihab-ud-din that he was as good an administrator as he was an accomplished general.

From a cursory glance at the history of this period it is clear that even though Kashmir had been subjected to untold tyrannies and repressions by the invasions of Dulchu and Achala, they had not lost their martial traditions. The spirit of the fighting clans of Damaras and Lavanyas still stood high. An able and efficient leader he had no difficulty in mustering these warlike elements around him. Shihab-ud-din supplied this focal point admirably well.

His personal character was without a blemish. He did not fritter away his energies in wine and women. He dressed simply and was of active habits. His greatest pleasure lay in conducting his victorious armies to distant lands. It appears that his army was mainly composed of the warlike tribes of Damaras (Dars), Lavanyas (Lon) and hill tribes from Poonch, Rajauri, Kishtwar and Muzaffarabad.

At the beginning of his reign he led an army to the borders of Sind and defeated the Jam on the banks of the Indus. Returning from there he led his armies into Afghanistan and gained a victory over the Afghans at Peshawar. Thence he marched without much opposition to the borders of Hindukush. He had an idea of subduing the kingdoms of Central Asia but changing his mind he instead went to Ladakh and Balistan which he subjugated. His commander, Chandra Damara, reduced Kishtwar and Jammu. During one of his expeditions to the Punjab he established a cantonment on the banks of the Sutlej where he met in 1361 the Raja of Nagarkot (Kangra) who was also returning from a raid on the dominions of Feroz Tughlaq. The Raja shared his spoils with Shihab-ud-din, expecting to receive his support and aid in his further depredations in the Punjab. But he was disappointed in his

expectations. Shihab-ud-din in all his conquering expeditions treated the vanquished people and their chieftains with profound generosity.

Kashmiri historians have recorded Shihab-ud-din's invasion of Firoz Tughlaq's dominions with 50,000 horse and 50,000 foot soldiers. An indecisive battle between the forces of the Sultans of Delhi and Kashmir is said to have been fought on the banks of the Sutlej. A treaty followed according to which Shihab-ud-din was given a free hand in all the territories from Sirhind to Kashmir. A matrimonial alliance was also concluded with Firoz's two daughters being wedded to Shihab-ud-din and his brother, Qutb-ud-din, while Shihab-ud-din's daughter was married to Firoz Tughlaq. This seems to have been Shihab-ud-din's last campaign. Thenceforth he devoted his attention to the consolidation of his kingdom.

Although Kashmir had been under Muslim kings now for over 30 years, it appears that there was no religious intolerance exhibited on the part of the people or of the kings. Most of Shihab-ud-din's army commanders, ministers and other high officials were Hindus. According to the Chronicler Jonaraja, the commanders under the Sultan were Chandra Damara, Laula Damara and Shura, besides Sayyid Hassan and Abdal Raina. He put his confidence in his two Hindu ministers, Kota Bhatta and Udyasri. The former was a descendant of Lalitaditya's minister and received many favours from the Sultan.

The Sultan was a great builder too. With the wealth which he acquired as a result of numerous expeditions to India and Ladakh, he constructed a splendid town named after him as Shihab-ud-dinpura (present Shadipur). During his reign a devastating flood destroyed the greater portion of the city of Srinagar. All the bridges were washed away and the king, in order to prevent such a calamities befalling his capital, built a beautiful town near the foot of the Hari Parbat hill and named it after his queen Laksmi. For his soldiers he constructed regular barracks there.

During his old age he fell into the snares of Lasa the daughter of his queen Laksmi's sister. This naturally led to great jealousy between the aunt and the niece and the matters came to a head when Lasa, in order to run the queen down, asked the king to banish his two sons, Hassan Khan and Ali Khan. The old queen was thus humbled and though Shihab-ud-din repented later and sent word to them to return to their home, it was already too late, the king dying meanwhile. His younger brother, Hindal, seized the opportunity and ascended the throne under

the name of Qutb-ud-din.

Shihab-ud-din's reign lasting for 19 years may be called one of the glorious periods in the history of the Sultans of Kashmir. He was a patron of learning and opened several schools. He was tolerant towards Hindus and Jonaraja records that once when owing to his foreign campaigns he was hard-up for money, one of his ministers, Udyasri suggested the melting of a brass image of the Buddha for coinage. The Sultan abhorrently replied: "Past generations have set up images to obtain fame and earn merit, and you propose to demolish them? How great is the enormity of such a deed!"<sup>10</sup>

Shihab-ud-din was loved at home by his subjects and feared abroad. He raised Kashmir and Kashmiris to great eminence and power and established their supremacy in Northern India.

#### Sultan Qutb-ud-Din (1373-89)

Qutb-ud-din retained most of the ministers and officials of his predecessor and showed his generosity in inviting prince Hassan, his brother's son to be his heir-apparent. But soon seeds of discord were sown between them by selfish ministers. Udyasri organised a revolt against the rule of the king and wanted to instal Hassan on the throne. But the conspiracy was soon found out and Udyasri after being captured was executed. The prince fled the country and we hear no more of him in the later narrative of events.

Sultan Qutb-ud-din ruled with a mild hand. He personally attended to the duties of the State and himself led a frugal life. He was a man of culture, a poet and a patron of learning. During his reign Sayyid Ali Hamadani paid his second visit to the country in 1379 and initiated the king into the deeper mysteries of Sufism. Sayyid Ali gave him a cap which the Sultan always wore under his crown. This cap was jealously guarded by the later Sultans too until it was buried along with the body of Fateh Shah in accordance with his will. The king also began to practise austerities and produced some mystic poems under the pen name of Qutb.

The Qutabdinpura quarter of Srinagar still retains his name, having been founded by this sultan. It is situated between the Zaina and the A'li bridges on the left bank of the Vitasta. In the later history of Kashmir it figures prominently as the headquarters of the rebellious sons of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. It is also famous for being the site of the

10. Dutt, op. cit., p. p. 44.

first Muslim residential college which produced eminent scholars.

At the beginning of his reign there was a rising in the Lohara district of Kashmir situated to the west of the Valley. The district was under a Hindu chieftain and when Qutb-ud-din sent Lolaka Damara, his commander-in-chief, to reduce the fort, the chief sent messages through his Brahmin emissaries to the effect that he was ready to hand over the fort to him. But elated by his first success Lolaka chastised the Brahmin messengers, ultimately killing them. The Lohara chief taking a warning from this and apprehending a worse fate for himself and his Kshatriya followers, decided to fight to the bitter end. Lolaka was killed and his army fled to the interior of Kashmir in great confusion.

Famines were of frequent occurrence during Qutb-ud-din's reign. The severity of the scarcity of foodstuffs was, as always, felt acutely during the months of June and July. During these months the king and his ministers used to perform *Yagnyas* and distribute cooked food amongst the starving population.

The performance of *Yagnyas* and the continuance of the Hindu dress, manners and customs among the converts to Islam, shows the tolerant and humanistic teachings of the first preachers of the new faith in the Valley. The Sultan and his Muslim Subjects used to visit a temple in Alau-ud-dinpura every morning. In contravention of the Muslim law Qutb-ud-din had two wives who were sisters. No wonder these non-orthodox practices did not appeal to Sayyid Ali Hamadani who exhorted the king to divorce one of his queens and remarry the other one according to the tenets of Islam. He also advised him to change the dress. But though he held the saint in great reverence he did not accept all his advice.

In his old age the king felt unhappy because of having no heir to leave his kingdom to. "At last", says Jonaraja, "there came a Yogi named Brahmanath and through his favour the king obtained a son after some time."<sup>11</sup> There were great festivities at his birth and the boy was named Shingara, later known to history as Sultan Sikandar. The queen gave birth to another son who was named Haibat. While the boys were still young Qutb-ud-din died, leaving the queen and the ministers in great grief. Ultimately through the intervention of Rai Magrey, the prime minister, the elder boy Sikandar was crowned the king of Kashmir.

11. Dutt, op. cit., p. 53.

**Sultan Sikandar (1389-1413)**

Sikandar began his career as king under the guidance and care of his able mother. There were, however, some political outbursts in the country. Rai Magrey, the minister of the late king, enjoyed enormous power and prestige in the country and Sikandar's mother was always in mortal dread of the powerful minister. He had been instrumental in getting Sikandar's brother, Haibat, murdered, apparently to please the king. But when he found that Sikandar was greatly offended and grieved at this treacherous act, he apprehended trouble for himself. Thenceforth his one aim was to establish his own rule in the country. Sikandar cleverly employed this ambitious minister in another direction. The neighbouring territory of Ladakh had already seceded from Tibet and Sikandar thought it to be the best time to subjugate it. He sent Magrey with a strong force to fulfil this aim. Sikandar was playing a double game. Should Magrey get defeated he would be freed from his ambitious rival and should his arms meet with success he would add a large territory to his kingdom.

Rai Magrey conducted the campaign very efficiently and after a short time considered himself strong enough to declare his independence. This was too much for Sikandar. He mustered a strong army and marched against the rebel. Magrey was captured and put in prison where he ended his life by committing suicide. Sikandar remained for some time in his newly acquired territory and put its administrative machinery on a sound basis.

The acquisition of Ladakh raised his prestige very high and his fame travelled far in Central Asia and Persia. He conducted several campaigns to the neighbouring principalities of Jammu, Rajauri and Poonch and after subjugating Gandhara or north western province of India, married the daughter of the chieftain of that place. This lady was destined to become the mother of Sultan Sikandar's illustrious son, Zain-ul-abidin.

The immediate result of these successes was a heavy influx of Sayyid theologians into Kashmir from Persia from where they were being driven out, due to political reasons, by the persecutions of Timur. Sikandar treated them well and gave them land and Jagirs to settle on. Sayyid Ali Hamadani's son, Sayyid Muhammad Hamadani, entered Kashmir accompanied by 700 Sayyids. By coming in contact with these orthodox Sunnis, the king was fired with religious zeal and he resolved to run the State on purely Islamic law and to propagate the faith by force. In this short-sighted policy he was actively assisted by Malik Suha Bhatt

(Saif-ud-din), a recent convert to Islam, whom he appointed his prime minister. Suha Bhatt accompanied by soldiers used to visit the famous temples and destroy them. Martand, Vijayeswari, Sureswari and other well-known temples of Kashmir were razed to the ground. By his tacit approval of the wicked deeds of his minister, history has held Sikandar responsible for these. Hindus in their thousands were put to the sword and the major portion of the Brahmin population of Kashmir migrated to the South.

Although Sikandar does not seem to have been a well-read man, he patronised literary men. To his court were attracted scholars from all parts of Asia, chiefly from Khorasan, Transoxiana and Mesopotamia. He seems to have been, however, a puritan and prohibited gambling, dancing and playing of musical instruments.

In contrast to his propensities for destruction of old temples, Sikandar built numerous mosques and monasteries of the wooden type of architecture. He founded a town after his name (present Nauhatta near Hari Parbat hill) and built the Jama Masjid there. He also built a mosque at Bijbihara, and the grand hospice in Srinagar known as Khankah Maula. Sikandar abolished the Sati because it was a Hindu custom. He also abolished some taxes and during his early reign revised the land revenue system. Later Mir Ali Hamadani disapproved of these acts of religious persecution and thenceforth Sikandar desisted from such practices. After a reign of 25 years Sikandar breathed his last in 1413 AD. He was buried in the enclosure outside the mausoleum of his wife below the fourth bridge in Srinagar.

**Sultan Ali Shah (1413-20)**

Sikandar was succeeded by his eldest son, Noor Khan, who ruled under the title of Ali Shah. The renegade Brahmin, Suha Bhatt, retained his office until his death and the persecution of the Hindus was not relaxed. Most of Ali Shah's reign was spent in intrigues and cross-intrigues among his ministers, and being weak and fickle-minded, he looked upon these helplessly. Suha Bhatt, however, died shortly before Ali Shah's end, when the king appointed his brother Shahi Khan (later known as Zain-ul-abidin) as his minister. By his tolerant deeds he won the confidence of the Hindus. Shortly after, Ali Shah was seized by a desire to retire from the world and to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Shahi Khan pleaded with him not to leave his post of duty, but Ali Shah was adamant. He left the country to the care of Shahi Khan but when

he reached Jammu, the Raja of that place, his father-in-law, persuaded him to desist from taking such a step which might ultimately cost him his throne. He offered his help and Ali Shah, changing his mind, returned to the valley at the head of the forces of the Raja of Jammu. Shahi Khan fled the country and took refuge with Jasrath, chief of the turbulent Khokar tribe with whom he had probably established a friendship at Timur's court where both had stayed for a pretty long time.

Ali Shah, not finding himself safe while Shahi Khan was still alive, led an army against the Khokar chief, foolishly exhausting his army by forced marches. When Jasrath learnt of his enemy's condition, he suddenly attacked him in the hills at Thana near the Pir Panjal Pass and overwhelmed his forces. Ali Shah's fate was uncertain. According to one account he escaped but as he was no more heard of, it is more probable that, as stated in some records, he was captured by Jasrath's troops and killed.

Shahi Khan returned victorious to the Valley and ascended the throne in June 1420 AD under the title of Zain-ul-abidin. He was not unmindful of his benefactor, Jasrath, whose later successes in the Punjab were due, in part, to the support received from Kashmir.<sup>12</sup>

12. "The Muslim chronicles refer to constant fight of Jasrath with the ruler of Jammu, and mention that he defeated and killed in battle Raja Bhim of Jammu, who had all along supported the Sultans of Delhi. We are further told that several times Jasrath was defeated and took refuge in the hills — Jonaraja also tells us that Zain-ul-abidin gave shelter to Jasrath when he was hard pressed by the Lord of Delhi."

## 9

## SULTAN ZAIN-UL-ABIDIN

With the accession of Zain-ul-abidin to the throne of Kashmir there opened up an era of glory and prosperity for the people of the kingdom. "Possessed of a broad and tolerant outlook", says Pandit Anand Koul, "and dominated with a desire to benefit mankind, he ruled with such equity and justice and did so much to improve the material prosperity of the people that one cannot fail to admire him. His benevolent rule demands special homage inasmuch as he lived at a period when he had no worthy and enlightened contemporary to emulate. In the world around him he could have found little to help him. He was a potentate encouraged to be tyrannical and selfish by tradition and especially by the example of his father, Sikandar. Zain-ul-abidin was deservedly sur-named Bud Shah or Great King. In spite of six centuries having rolled by since he lived, his name is still remembered with genuine reverence and gratitude. Take the name of Bud Shah before a Kashmiri and at once he will with a happy countenance rhyme it with 'Pad Shah'."<sup>1</sup>

Zain-ul-abidin was the favourite son of his father, and it was because of this that he received a good education at home. Fortunately for him and the people of Kashmir, he got an opportunity to travel abroad and learn new arts and crafts at the court of Timur in Samarqand. How he got the opportunity is an interesting story in itself. In 1398 AD Timur Lang or Tamerlane, after his conquest of Persia and Turkistan, came to India. Sikandar was then the ruler of Kashmir and when Tamerlane reached Attock, Sikandar wrote to him acknowledging him as his liege-lord. Tamerlane was pleased at this and sent him an elephant and other gifts in token of his accepting Sikandar's allegiance. On receipt of these, Sikandar sent several precious articles as presents to Tamerlane and wrote to him praying for the honour of being permitted to come to his audience to pay homage to him. Tamerlane replied that he should

1. *Jammu and Kashmir State*, p. 34.

come to meet him at Attock when he would be returning after the conquest of Hindustan. When Tamerlane was returning to Samarqand after his sanguinary and plundering career in Hindustan, Sikandar started from Srinagar with several rare articles which he wanted to present to him at Attock. But he had not gone farther than Baramula when news was received that Tamerlane had already proceeded from Attock towards Samarqand. Sikandar then returned to Srinagar and sent his second son, Shahi Khan, then a young boy, with the presents to Tamerlane at Samarqand. Shahi Khan carried out his father's mission successfully. Tamerlane bestowed much favour upon Shahi Khan but the latter could not obtain permission to return to Kashmir for seven years. During this long period Shahi Khan took the opportunity of interesting himself in the arts and crafts of Samarqand which, being the capital of the great conqueror, was at the height of its wealth and glory. When Tamerlane died in 1405 while conducting a vast expedition against China over the mountains of Tartary, Shahi Khan returned to Kashmir.

### Administrative Reforms

Imbued with high ideals of kingship, Zain-ul-abidin set himself to improving the material prosperity of the country by energetic and sustained efforts. As can well be imagined he found great frustration among the people and the whole administrative machinery broken down due to the ill-advised policy of Sikandar and the subsequent war of succession. The first requisite, therefore, was to bring some order out of the chaotic conditions prevailing in the country. For this purpose he encouraged the old class of official, the Pandits to return to Kashmir giving them every facility and completely guaranteeing them religious and civil liberties.

Jonaraja records that the judges who were till then accustomed to taking bribes from both the plaintiff and the defendant, were severely dealt with and corruption among the public officials was totally rooted out. Similarly crime was ruthlessly put down. All the criminals were apprehended and put behind the bars. Realising that unemployment and poverty resulted in the commission of crime he saw to it that suitable employment was guaranteed to the erstwhile criminals. He also introduced the system of proper registration of important documents to prevent fraudulent transactions in property. He dispensed justice quickly and intelligently. The Sultan provided his subjects with a code of laws and had them all engraved on copper plates and placed in

public markets and halls of justice. He, however, abhorred bloodshed and rarely put to death any offender for a petty crime. It is recorded of him, says Rodgers, that he gave away 400 camel-loads for the repose of the soul of a man whom he had executed because of his guilt of killing his brother. When the Chaks set fire to his magnificent palace of 12 storeys, he drove them back and had their leader flogged to death, but took his son, Husain Chak, into favour. This mildness of temper and lenience in punishment did not, however, encourage any crime in the country. This was due to the complete impartiality of Zain-ul-abidin as a judge. "though the king was kind-hearted", writes Jonaraja, "yet for the sake of his people he would not forgive even his son or minister or a friend if he were guilty."<sup>2</sup> He cites the case of Mir Yahaya who, while drunk, had killed his wife. Although he was a great favourite of the king he was found guilty and executed. Jonaraja also gives an interesting story of how the king dispensed justice intelligently. Once a Brahmin, a resident of Kamraj (the lake district) complained to the king that he could not get back his stolen cow which he had, after four years, found accidentally with a man living in the Maraj district. The king summoned the alleged thief to his presence and asked him to reply to the charge of the Brahmin. The man replied that the cow belonged to him and was with him from its birth. In order to test the veracity of his statement the king threw some green water-nuts before the cow and its calf. The cow ate them with relish while the calf after a few sniffs turned away its head from them. This clearly proved that the cow while with the Brahmin was accustomed to eating water-nuts, a product of the Wular Lake, whereas the calf which had been brought up in the Maraj district was totally unaccustomed to this sort of food. The cow was restored to her lawful owner and the thief was suitably punished.

Previously, due to continued lawlessness and insecurity of life and property, much of the land was left uncultivated by the farmers. Zain-ul-abidin's first great reform was the revision of the land assessment, reducing it to a fourth of the total produce in some places and to a seventh in others. The cultivators were further protected from the exactions of the revenue officers by a law which prohibited the latter from accepting any gifts.

### Military Expeditions

Side by side with the establishment of an ordered and humane

2. *Kings of Kashmira*, p. 80.

government, he reorganised the army which had severely suffered in discipline and equipment during the preceding years. When he ascended the throne the army had both the infantry and cavalry divisions. He so organised it as to leave no possibility of rebellion or rising taking place. Moreover his personal treatment of the officers so charmed them that at his bidding they were ready to march with their men right into the jaws of death. He took great advantage of the recently discovered use of gunpowder and ordered many kinds of cannon to be manufactured in Kashmir. He experimented with new metals and their alloys until he found one which was new and hard. With this a cannon was cast and "at his command", says Srivara, "I composed a few lines in praise of the weapon."

With a formidable army he reconquered the Punjab and western Tibet. In all his campaigns he acted very kindly and generously to both the people and the chiefs of the newly acquired territories. Besides putting down internecine conspiracies and removing such elements as tended to disturb the tranquility of his realm, the Sultan further proceeded to enter into friendly relations with his immediate neighbours as well as the potentates and rulers of distant lands. He sent ambassadors with adequate presents to the kings of Khorasan, Turkistan, Turkey, Egypt and Delhi. The king of Tibet reciprocated with suitable presents.

### Development of Arts and Crafts

It is, however, for his encouragement of arts and crafts that Kashmir will, for all times to come, be indebted to Zain-ul-abidin. Mention has been made of his study of these arts in Samarqand. With his accession to the throne he invited competent teachers and craftsmen from there to train his subjects in these arts. Among some of the industries introduced by him may be mentioned carpet, papier mache, silk, and paper-making. Kashmiris with their natural aptitude for things artistic, soon acquired a great mastery in these crafts and began to produce articles in such beautiful designs and varieties that they acquired an unrivalled fame in Asia and Europe. Even a century after Zain-ul-abidin's death, Mirza Haider of Kashgar who brought Kashmir under his virtual rule, was struck by the industrial and artistic productions of Kashmir. Says he in his famous *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*: "In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are in most cities uncommon, such as stone-polishing, stone-cutting, bottle-making, window-cutting, gold beating, etc. In the whole Maver-ul-Nahr (the country beyond the river Oxus, that is,

Khorasan) except in Samarqand and Bukhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant. This is all due to Zain-ul-abidin."<sup>3</sup>

"Zain-ul-abidin", writes Pandit Anand Koul, "turned Kashmir into a smiling garden of industry inculcating in the hearts of the people sane conceptions of labour and life and also implanting in their minds the germs of real progress. He introduced correct measures and weights and made artisans and traders take solemn oaths (which in those halcyon days one could not easily break) not to kill their golden goose by cheating and swindling. He thus promoted commercial morality and integrity and industrial righteousness — qualities which constitute the backbone of a people's credit and reputation. It was through these virtues that the Kashmiris successfully carried on their shawl and other trades worth crores of rupees annually with distant corners of the globe at a period when Kashmir was an isolated State and communications with the outside world were very difficult."<sup>4</sup>

### Music and Dance

Zain-ul-abidin was a great lover of music and other fine arts. He always made generous allowances to musicians. Hearing of the Sultan's generosity and of his love for music, a good many masters in this art flocked to Kashmir from all directions. One such artist was Mulla Udi of Khorasan. He played on Ud to the great delight of the Sultan and his courtiers. Another master was Mulla Jamal who was a great expert in vocal music. Srivara the author of the *Zaina Rajatarangini* was also an accomplished musician and he used to entertain the king often and the latter would always reward him for his fine performances. The Raja of Gwalior hearing of the Sultan's taste for music sent him all the standard books on Indian music, including the *Sangitachudamani*. Gwalior has been the centre of this art and later was proud of its associations with Tan Sen. It was thus indeed due to Zain-ul-abidin that music in Kashmir reached a high pitch of excellence.

The Sultan also reintroduced the art of drama and dancing which had suffered due to the puritanism of Sikandar. Many actors and dancers, both men and women, came to Kashmir at his invitation and the king would hold special festivals for their performances.

3. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, Elias and Ross, p. 434.

4. *Jammu and Kashmir State*, p. 37.

Festivals and fairs were held at different places in the Valley, for example at Pampore, Bijbihara, Anantnag, Baramula, Magam, etc., and the king would grace these occasions with his presence. Fireworks and illuminations were also attractions of these fairs.

### Public Works

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin was a great builder. Remains of his numerous towns, villages, canals and bridges still exist and bear his name. To increase the agricultural production, he constructed several canals noted among which were the Utpalapur, Nandashaila, Bijbihara, Advin, Amburher, Manasbal, Zainagir, and the Shahkul at Bawan. Many of these canals supplied water to the otherwise dry Karewa lands. During the past 70 years many of them have been repaired and reconstructed and put to use. "The long and peaceful reign of Zain-ul-abidin", says Stein, "was productive of important irrigation works. Jonaraja's and Srivara's chronicles give a considerable list of canals constructed under the Sultan." Jonaraja mentions that one of his engineers, Damara Kach, paved a road with stones and thus made it fit for use even during the rainy season. Similarly he built the first wooden bridge in Kashmir still known by the name of Zainakadal (Zain-ul-abidin's bridge).

### Medieval Wooden Architecture

The Sultan introduced and encouraged wooden architecture and built numerous beautiful and artistic buildings throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir. Mirza Haider mentions in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* that the palace *Rajdan* was a unique building in the East. It was 12 storeys high and contained numerous rooms, halls, verandahs and staircases. It was decorated with exquisite carvings and fresco paintings. He had constructed another palatial building, the *Zain Dab* in Zainagiri which the Chaks burned down. In all villages and towns he built rest houses for himself and travellers so that his subjects might not be put to trouble during his frequent visits thereto.

Lawrence says that Zain-ul-abidin planted gardens wherever he went, four of his well-known gardens being Baghi Zainagiri, Baghi Zaina Dab, Baghi Zainapur and Baghi Zainakut. It is, however, difficult to trace them now. The lay-out and design of these gardens seems to have been of the purely Kashmiri type improved upon by the influence from Samargand and Bukhara.

### Encouragement of Learning

No account of Zain-ul-abidin's reign can be complete without the mention of the great physician, Shri Bhatt, who cured the king of a dangerous disease. When on his recovery the king wanted to make a valuable gift to the Pandit, the latter refused to take it. "The only gift I will receive," said he to the king is "the removal of all restrictions on the Pandits imposed by Sikandar including the poll tax (*Zajia*). The king while eulogising Shri Bhatt on his concern for the welfare of the members of his community readily granted him the request.

Henceforth the Pandits performed their religious functions without let or hindrance and most of them who had left the Valley at the religious persecution of Sikandar returned to their homeland.

Zain-ul-abidin's love for letters is well known in Kashmir. He realised that learning, for which Kashmir was noted from the earliest times, needed to be encouraged so that the land of Sarada might again shine forth as the fountain of knowledge and learning. For this purpose he established numerous schools, colleges and a residential university. His interest in the intellectual growth and development of his subjects was keen and unflagging and he extended his patronage to scholars in as unstinted a measure as he did to artisans and craftsmen. Hence the great influx into Kashmir of scholars and men of letters from other lands. Many Kashmiri Pandits well-versed in Sanskrit adorned his court. Among these may be mentioned Soma Pandit who held a high post in the Translation Bureau and wrote an account of Zain-ul-abidin's life in his book, *Zaina Charit*.

Bodhi Bhatt, another eminent scholar, translated several Sanskrit works into Persian. Jonaraja and Srivara the famous authors of the later *Rajatarangini* were patronised by the king. Among the Persian and Arabic scholars may be mentioned the names of Maulana Kabir, Mulla Hafiz Baghdadi, Mulla Jamal-ud-din and Qazi Mir Ali.

It is evident that all these literary activities with all their incidental expenses could not have continued and acquired the volume they did unless the king himself were a scholar, "well versed in the literature of his age", and thoroughly conversant with a number of languages. His activities in the domain of literature and scholarship were not confined to translation of books. He spent huge sums in collecting a library which could favourably compare with the one collected by the Samanids. The library remained intact for 100 years after his death when it was



destroyed. As a result of the king's encouragement, education was imparted to high and low. Writes Srivara:

"Even women, cooks and porters were poets; and the books composed by them exist to this day in every house. If the king be a sea of learning and partial to merit, the people too become so. The meritorious king Zain-ul-abidin for the purpose of earning merit built extensive lodging houses for students and the voices of students studying logic and grammar arose from these houses. The king helped the students by providing teachers, books, houses, food and money and he extended the limits of learning in all branches...Even the families which never dreamt of learning produced men who through the favour of the king, became known for their erudition.....There was not a branch of learning of arts or literature or fine arts which were not studied."<sup>5</sup>

Nor did the king neglect other social welfare activities. Under him flourished many celebrated *vaid*s and *hakims* who looked after the health of the people. Similarly Karpura Bhatt the famous physician of his time was patronised by the king. Many famous *hakims* from Central Asia and India came to his court and the king opened dispensaries in various parts of the kingdom where free medicines were supplied to the patients.

There were other charitable institutions which the king maintained. Jonaraja records that in various towns food was distributed free to the poor and infirm. At special festivals which were frequently held, feeding of the poor was a regular feature. "The king caused rest houses for travellers to be built at the outskirts of villages and they were supported by the villagers; he caused shelters to be built in the forests."

### Religious Toleration

It is, however, for his high sense of toleration that Zain-ul-abidin will always be known in history. Living in an age when religious persecutions were the order of the day, his reign shines out as a bright gem amidst the narrow-minded and short-sighted rulers of his time. He made Kashmir the real paradise in which men of all religions and nationalities mingled together and shared one another's joys and sorrows. In return for his patronage and love the Hindus vied with

5. Srivara, *Jaina Rajatarangini* pp 144-45.

Shri Bhatt who once cured the king of a severe illness became his trusted counsellor.

the Muslims in turning their homeland into a smiling garden of peace and prosperity.

Sikandar's unstatesmanlike policy had left many a deep wound behind. As mentioned, a majority of Hindus had left Kashmir taking with them valuable books both religious and secular. Zain-ul-abidin had already as heir-apparent and prime minister of his brother, made himself popular with the Hindus who looked upon him as their best protector during the dark period of religious bigotry. When, therefore, he ascended the throne, confidence returned to them and as soon as he sent messengers to India inviting them back to their birthplace, they responded with great alacrity and pleasure. He enacted certain laws which vouchsafed to them a just administration and trial of their cases according to their own laws and customs. The odious persecutory measures instituted by Sikandar and Suha Bhatt, were revoked, and a general toleration of all religions was proclaimed. Many of the temples which had been demolished in the preceding reign were rebuilt and permission was granted to erect new temples. Jonaraja and Srivara mention that the king built two temples near Ishabar and granted rent-free lands to maintain them. The king remitted the poll tax and granted Jagirs to deserving Hindus. He penalised the killing of cows and himself abstained from eating meat during the holy festivals of the Hindus. The king forbade the killing of birds and fish in several *Nagas* (springs) sacred to the Hindus. The *Rajatarangini* gives a detailed account of how the king took part in the annual Nagayatra festival, when he would don the robes of a Hindu mendicant and perform the pilgrimage in company with other pilgrims. On the way he fed thousands of ascetics and Brahmins. To expiate for the wrongs done to the Hindus by his father he built numerous homes for the widows of the Brahmins killed in the preceding reigns.

Zain-ul-abidin was much impressed with the Hindu *Sastras* and got many including the *Mahabharata*, translated into Persian for his close study. Srivara mentions that the king studied these scriptures assiduously and was fond of holding discussions on them.

He installed many learned and experienced Hindus on high posts of trust and honour. Shri Bhatt, Tilakacharya, Shiva Bhatt, Simha Bhatt, Karpura Bhatt, Rupya Bhatt, Bodhi Bhatt and Shri Ramanand were some of the famous intellectuals and administrators who rose to power under him. The administration was completely run by the Kashmiri Pandits who at his bidding studied Persian, the new court language.

Zain-ul-abidin led a saintly life. He did not take any money from



the State treasury for his personal use, but contented himself with the earnings from a copper mine near Aishmuqam. He had only one wife in contrast to the prevailing custom among Eastern Potentates of having a large seraglio. He abstained from the use of liquors and during Ramzan would not even take meat. In his private life he wore a simple dress: although his regal robes became famous throughout Northern India and Central Asia for their fine and costly material. He was a highly religious man, extending equal respect to all the great religions of the world. He venerated holy saints and faqirs. "The king", says Jonaraja, "took his instructions about religious penances and about pleasures of life both from superior and inferior hermits and gave them ear-pendants, vessels of gold, and clothes."<sup>6</sup>

### Flood and Famine

Towards the end of his reign a severe famine occurred in Kashmir. The contemporary historian, Srivara, gives harrowing tales of the sufferings of the people. The immediate cause of the famine was an early fall of snow which completely destroyed the ripe paddy. "A hungry man", records the Chronicler, "distressed with the thought of what he should eat entered a house at night, and discarding gold and other riches, stole rice from a pot.....Feeble, emaciated men in villages longed to obtain rice. A large number of people died. Famine-stricken people ate leaves, roots and even twigs of trees. Formerly one *Khari* of paddy could be had for three hundred *dinaras* but owing to the famine the same *Khari* of paddy could not be obtained even for 1500."<sup>7</sup>

The king exerted every muscle to alleviate the sufferings of the people. He gave out paddy from his and government stores free to the hungry people. Fortunately the following year's crop was a bumper one which quickly relieved the distress of the people. After normal conditions were restored the black marketers and hoarders who had swindled the people by selling foodstuffs at abnormally high rates were brought to book and made to return the excess of the prices charged by them. He also, by a royal decree, cancelled all the debts incurred by needy people in their hour of distress when unscrupulous moneylenders and *baniyas* had taken undue advantage of the sufferings of the people.

Another calamity afflicted the people two years after the famine in

6. Jonaraja, *Dvitiya Rajatarangini* (ed. Peterson), p. 90.

7. Ibid., p. 118-19.

the shape of a devastating flood. Heavy rains fell incessantly for a number of days resulting in the melting of snow on mountain tops. The various tributaries of the Vitasta swelled and washed down numerous trees, houses, cattle and human beings. Particularly destructive was the swollen Visav. The city of Srinagar situated as it was towards a low-lying locality was the worst sufferer. Houses were destroyed and people ran for safety to the hill-tops of Sankaracharya and Hari Parbat. Apprehending similar occurrences in future the king seriously thought of shifting his capital city towards the high land round about the Hari Parbat hill. He thus founded his new city which is to this day known as Naushahar. The new town was laid out on a well-devised plan with broad roads and streets all paved with stones. The houses built therein were of a better type and more cleanly. Formerly the waters of the Dal Lake joined the river through the middle of the old city but the king got a new canal, the Mar, dug which connected the Dal with the Anchar Lake direct. The Mar canal was crossed by artistically built stone bridges some of which were extant till very recent times when the Mar canal was filled up to make a road. The canal was lined with dressed stones and houses of rich officials and traders rose up on its banks.

### Fratricidal War Among His Sons

Early in his reign Zain-ul-abidin associated with himself in the government and even designated as his heir, his younger brother Muhammad but the latter predeceased him, and though the king admitted his son Haider Khan to the confidential position which his father had held, the birth of three sons of his own excluded his nephew from succession. But unfortunately these sons proved a great disappointment. It was in his own life that Zain-ul-abidin saw the signs of decay of all that he had assiduously built up. His sons, Adam Khan, Haji Khan and Behram Khan, were of vicious character and though their father tried his best to reconcile them with one another, they continued the internecine warfare resulting in the weakening of the kingdom and distress of the people.

Zain-ul-abidin had sent his eldest son, Adam Khan, to recover Baltistan and Haji Khan, the second son, the fort and district of Loharkot, both of which provinces had revolted. Adam Khan returned first to the capital and flushed with his victory wanted to measure his strength with his brother and father. A similar feeling took hold of Haji Khan and he arrayed his forces opposite that of his brother and father. But

he was defeated and fled to Bhimber. Zain-ul-abidin appointed Adam Khan, to administer the Kamaraj district but his treatment towards the people was abominable. In bold contrast to the just and efficient administration of his father, he "plundered the people of their riches by threat, craft or by deceiving them with false hopes and in some places by force. His servants oppressed timid women and cruelly treated the villagers and took care to avoid courts of justice."<sup>8</sup> He was a profligate taking special pleasure in drinking in public.

Seeing these depredations of his son, Zain-ul-abidin was much distressed and sent a rebuke to him. This incensed him and he raised the banner of revolt and established his forces in Sopore which he captured. Zain-ul-abidin went to meet him and at the same time called his second son, Haji Khan, from exile. Adam Khan on hearing of his brother's arrival at Baramula, fled towards Gilgit and Zain-ul-abidin returned to Srinagar with his son, Haji Khan, when the latter atoned by faithful service for past disobedience and was rewarded by being designated heir to the throne.

As the old king became more sickly the internecine warfare among them took an acuter form and towards the end of his life major skirmishes were of frequent occurrence. Futile were his exhortations to unity, vain his fables of the bundle of arrows and of the snake with many heads, which he related to his sons. Ultimately Adam Khan who was hated by the people was given a crushing defeat and he had to flee, leaving the country and the throne safe for Haji Khan on Zain-ul-abidin's death in 1470 AD.

Long was his death lamented and even up to this day the people take his name with reverence and gratitude as a word of good omen. No tribute can repay the debt Kashmir owes to him for ever. The Poet chronicled the year of his demise in this feelingly rendered Persian stanza:

*Sultan Zain-ul-abidin khima dar khulde-barin  
Be nur shud taj o negin be nur shud arzo sama  
Az bahri tarikhash 'ayan be sar shudah ander jahan  
'Adlo karam, 'ilm o' alam jah o hasham sulh o safa.*

Sultan Zain-ul-abidin went to dwell in heaven  
The crown and the seal became lustreless, the earth and the sky  
became gloomy;

8. Ibid., p. 126.

From that date evidently headless became in the world;  
Justice and generosity; learning and power; glory and pomp;  
peace and tolerance.

With the death of Zain-ul-abidin the power of the royal line founded by Shah Mir began to wane, though it took some more time before the rule of this dynasty came to a virtual close. The later kings of this line were mere puppets in the hands of rival but powerful clans headed by various chiefs. Their fortunes closely followed the latter's rise to, or fall from power.

## CIVIL WAR AND POLITICAL UNREST

The smouldering embers of rivalry among the three sons of Zain-ul-abidin burst into a fire on the approaching death of their father. As already mentioned Zain-ul-abidin's closing years were embittered by the behaviour of his sons towards him and towards one another. He had tried his best to forge bonds of unity among them, but he did not meet with success.

To ensure the continuation of his lineage and a peaceful succession to the throne, he first nominated Haji, his second son, as his heir-apparent and when this led to trouble, he revoked his decision, nominating Adam, the eldest, in his place. But Adam's treatment of the people as governor of Kamraj and his degenerated moral character, made him change his decision again. He then bestowed favours on his youngest son, Behram, whom he wanted to declare his successor. But the latter had come under the influence of Haji, whose company he would not give up even for the honours that the king wished to confer on him. Exasperated, the old Sultan left the decision of succession to the strength of arms of his sons after his death.

But the wicked brothers did not wait for him to die peacefully. While the noble Sultan, frustrated and grief-stricken, lay on his death-bed, — his trusted councillors and beloved wife<sup>1</sup> having predeceased him — Behram advised Haji to proceed to the palace, imprison the ministers hostile to his cause and seize the horses and the treasure. But Haji desisted from embarking on such a course. Adam on his

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1. Her name according to Srivara was Vodha Khatona (Chief Queen), but later historians call Taj Khatun. She was the daughter of Sayyid Muhammad Baihaqi and gave birth to two daughters. She had no son and the Sultan married a second wife, the daughter of the ruler of Jammu. She was the mother of his four sons, Adam, Haji, Jasrat and Behram. Jasrat probably died in young age, as we find no mention of his name later.

part moved with his followers to the capital, passing the night on its outskirts. Meanwhile Hassan Kache a powerful noble and king's treasurer, took the oath of allegiance to Haji and handed over the treasury to him. This unnerved Adam, and realising that his cause was lost, he fled. Haji's son, Prince Hassan, who was governor of Poonch, came post-haste to the help of his father, whose position was thus strengthened further.

### Sultan Haider Shah (1470-72)

And when the great Sultan Zain-ul-abidin breathed his last on Friday the 12th May, 1470, Haji Khan ascended the throne under the name of Haider Shah.

No sooner had, however, the spectacular ceremonies of his coronation ended, than Adam Khan, who was in Jammu, planned an attack on the Valley. He was encouraged in his design by the unpopularity of Haider who gave himself up to the pleasures of wine and women, permitting the affairs of the State to be attended to by unscrupulous ministers and advisers. His chief counsellor was one Purna, a barber, who instigated him to put to death the powerful noble, Hassan Kache, with whose help and influence he had acquired the throne.

Hassan Kache's murder and ruthless persecution of Adam's sympathisers in Kashmir, discouraged the latter to launch an attack on Haider's forces. He repaired to the court of Manik Dev, the ruler of Jammu, his maternal uncle, where he met his end in an encounter between the Jammu forces and the Turks. Haider, when he heard the sad news, lamented loudly and had his body brought from Jammu and interred beside the grave of his mother.

Thoroughly conversant with Hindu and Muslim scriptures and a patron of art and literature, Haider Shah was generous and tolerant by nature. But he was ruthless to his enemies and would never forgive an injury to himself. Through the intrigues and evil counsels of his favourite, Purna, he adopted a policy of persecution of his Hindu subjects, some of whom, on the instigation of Purna himself, were responsible for damaging the Sayyid Khanqah. "He spent most of his time in wine cups and in the society of women and musicians."<sup>2</sup>

This resulted in his neglect of the administration of the kingdom and the territories which were tributary to Kashmir, declared themselves free. With a view to arresting the dwindling power of Kashmir, Haider

2. Hassan, *Kashmir Under the Sultans*, p. 99.

sent his son, Prince Hassan, at the head of an armed force, to bring the rebellious chiefs to their knees. The campaign proved successful and when the prince returned to Kashmir after an absence of six months, he had already reduced to submission the Raja of Rajapuri (Rajauri) who gave him his daughter in marriage. Similarly the chief of Madra and of the Khokhars reacknowledged Kashmir ruler's suzerainty.

But meanwhile the political atmosphere in the capital had turned hostile to the Prince. Behram, taking advantage of the king's failing health and indolent habits, had acquired ascendancy at the court. But soon Hassan who had endeared himself to the army, won the support of Ahmad Aswad, a popular and influential noble, who headed the movement for the replacement of the incompetent king by some able and energetic man capable of restoring peace and plenty to the harassed land.

Haider Shah, however, did not live long. During one of his drinking carouses held in his glass-room on the top storey of his palace, he fell down and bled profusely from the nose. Already weakened by gout and other ailments, he immediately lost consciousness, which he was never destined to regain.

Ahmad Aswad approached Behram to proclaim himself the king and appoint Hassan as his heir-apparent. This, he thought, was the best arrangement to secure peace and good government to the land. But Behram did not agree to the nomination of Hassan as the heir-apparent. Thereupon Ahmad, with the consent of other nobles and ministers, proclaimed Hassan as king, and made preparations to attack Behram, who was alarmed and behaving in a cowardly manner fled the city.

Haider Shah died on 13 April 1472 after a reign of one year and ten months and was buried near the grave of his father. Hassan Shah signalled his accession by conferring the title of Malik on Ahmad Aswad and appointing him as his Wazir. His son, Nauroz, was appointed the Lord of Marches and Jehangir Magrey, another powerful noble, was entrusted with the chief command of the army.

### Sultan Hassan Shah (1472-84)

Hassan Shah in his youth was a man of pluck and adventure, but on ascending the throne he did not display any outstanding merit for the job and entrusted the care of his kingdom to Malik Ahmad who had already acquired a great influence over him.

Soon after Hassan Shah's accession to the throne, Behram, his

uncle, who had fled to the Punjab, invaded the kingdom at the invitation of some nobles. When he arrived in Kamraj, the Sultan proceeded to Sopore, chief town of the district. He sent his trusted commander, Tazi Bhatt, against the pretender who, being let down by his supporters in the king's camp, received a crushing defeat and fled to Zainagir, a nearby Pargana. He was however, pursued and captured. Hassan Shah had him shackled and blinded and he died a miserable death three years later.

At this time Malik Ahmad was all-powerful at his court. Two nobles, Abhimanyu and Malik Zada who had risen high in the Sultan's favour, were removed and disgraced by the machinations of Malik Ahmad. Abhimanyu had supported the cause of Hassan's father, Haider Shah, during the lifetime of Zain-ul-abidin and hence both Haider and Hassan reposed great trust in him. But becoming ambitious, he plotted to overthrow Malik Ahmad, the Wazir, who countered the intrigue and denounced him before the king. He was blinded and thrown into prison, where he died after two years. Similar was the fate of Malik Zada who along with his friend Purna was thrown into prison. Their illgotten wealth was confiscated by the Sultan.

During the early days of his rule, Hassan Shah endeavoured to revive the practices and edicts of Zain-ul-abidin. He himself was a well-read man and patronised a good number of Sanskrit and Persian scholars. Many Sanskrit books were got translated into Persian and the Sultan acquired a great proficiency in religious and literary books of the Hindus. Says the Chronicler—"The king learnt the six schools of philosophy and the different works of these six schools became one in him."

The Sultan was a great builder too. It was he who rebuilt the Shah Hamadan mosque and the Jama Masjid in Srinagar which originally built by Sikandar, had been destroyed in a fire in 1479 AD. He built a *Khanaqah* or hospice at Didmar in Srinagar, and his nobles, particularly Malik Ahmad built several religious edifices. The Hindus and Buddhists too repaired their temples and *viharas* and built new ones.

But the rot had already gone deep enough. Hassan Shah's good and benevolent nature was offset by his personal shortcomings. An addict to liquor and given to the worst type of debauchery — his court had 1200 Hindustani musicians and an equally large number of concubines — he was perhaps the last of the line of Shah Mir who could be called to have maintained a semblance of kingly power. His reign of 12 years witnessed the struggle for ascendancy between the Sayyids and local nobles, the latter commanding the support of the people of Kashmir.

### *Sayyid Domination*

The entry of Sayyids from Central Asia and Persia during the reigns of Qutab-ud-din and Sultan Sikandar dealt a grievous blow to Islam as propagated by the Sufi *dervishes*. It was these Islamic fundamentalists who instigated Sultan Sikandar to demolish Hindu temples and to forcibly convert them to Islam. With the wholesale persecution of Hindus, a large number of them fled the Valley, taking refuge in the Hindu-ruled states in Central, Western and Southern India.

With the accession of Zain-ul-abidin, this policy of Hindu persecution was reversed and most of those who had left the Valley returned to their homeland.

But taking undue advantage of an instable rule after Zain-ul-abidin's death, the Sayyids had laid a solid foundation of Islam in Northern India. A stream of Muslim Sayyids from Central Asia and Persia flowed into the Punjab and Kashmir after Timur's invasion. They settled in colonies and coming as they did from the line of the Prophet, they were treated with great respect by the Muslim kings. By and by they acquired an ascendancy over other classes and grew so much in power and influence that in 1414, Khizr Khan a leader of the Sayyids attacked and captured the kingdom of Delhi, thus founding the Sayyid dynasty, whose rule lasted till 1450. The last ruler of this dynasty Sayyid Alau-ud-din, being incompetent, abdicated voluntarily in favour of the governor of the Punjab, Bahlol Lodi.

Kashmir during the period following the death of Zain-ul-abidin came under the political domination of the Sayyids whose ancestors had originally come in large numbers to Kashmir during his father's (Sikandar's) rule and had settled there. Sayyid Nasir and his kith who were direct descendants of the Prophet were greatly respected by Zain-ul-abidin. Nasir was a man of great accomplishments and the king gave his daughter in marriage to him.

The Sayyids were given high positions and were shown great favours, being granted estates to rule over. Contracting marriages in the royal and other noble families, the Sayyids acquired huge fortunes and lived a life of luxury.

But to the common people they proved a source of misery and oppression. Says Srivara: "These foreigners had become rich after coming to this country and had forgotten their previous history, even as men forget previous life on coming out of the womb. They oppressed the people." Gradually the Sayyids accumulated all political power in their

hands and appointed their own men on all important public posts. It seemed then that within a short time the Kashmiris would be relegated to the position of hewers of wood and drawers of water.

But the people could not take it lying down. They found an efficient and energetic leader in the person of Malik Tazi Bhatt.

#### *Tazi Bhatt*

Very little is known about his early history except that he came of a very poor family of Kashmir. Born during the early years of Zain-ul-abidin's reign his days of boyhood passed in great penury and he could not afford even to go to school and used to wander about the city in tattered clothes. But what he lacked in education was fully compensated by his active and martial habits. He received instruction in archery and other arts of war from various soldiers of fortune with whom Kashmir abounded then. But with all his interest in these warlike activities he could not make appreciable progress in his material well-being.

His rise to power is ascribed to chance. One day king Zain-ul-abidin had arranged an archery contest and offered a handsome prize as well as a position of rank to the man who would hit the mark from a certain distance. Many were the best archers of the land who attempted to carry away the prize but failed. Ultimately Tazi Bhatt who was one of the spectators witnessing the contest, rose up and begged permission of the king to try his hand. To humiliate his best generals, the king gave assent and amid the jeerings and shoutings of the army, Tazi Bhatt in his miserable clothes but with a confident gait, came into the ring. He raised the bow and apparently in a careless manner let go an arrow and lo! it accurately hit the mark. Great was the jubilation among the people who triumphantly carried him to the presence of the king. The prize was awarded to poor Tazi Bhatt and with it the days of his poverty ended. Hence the Kashmiri proverb:

*Greh yeli asi kasun Shahas*

*Teli ho mali sapdi Tazi Bhatt kan.*

Should God will to remove the evil of your stars,

Good luck will fall on you as it did on Tazi Bhatt by his arrow shot.

Tazi Bhatt though in his teens rose rapidly as a military and popular leader. Seeing his abilities and the favours shown to him by the king, Malik Ahmad, the ambitious minister, adopted him as his own son. Tazi Bhatt was assigned to the service of Prince Hassan who later ascended the throne on the death of his father, Haider Shah. Tazi Bhatt served

Prince Hassan faithfully particularly when "he was in the foreign country," leading a campaign to reduce the rebellious chiefs of the hill regions on the outskirts of the Valley.

During Hassan Shah's reign, the Sayyids, under their leader Jamal, became turbulent and the popular resentment against them rose to a high pitch. Tazi Bhatt heading the popular agitation demanded their extermination and the confiscation of their estates. Hassan Shah fearing an open revolt acceded to these demands and many of the Sayyids were turned out of the Valley. Some of them went to Delhi where their kinsmen were still in great power. Most of them, however, took shelter under the petty chieftains on the borders of Kashmir.

This act of the king relieved the poor Kashmiris of an irksome domination and the stock of Tazi Bhatt's popularity rose very high. His adopted father at this time arranged a marriage between him and the daughter of Jehangir Magrey, an important noble and the commander of the royal forces. This woman had been previously married to a Sayyid but Jehangir finding that she was ill-treated by her husband got her divorced. This relation greatly strengthened the political position of Tazi Bhatt.

Malik Ahmad, with the help of his adopted son and Jehangir Magrey, set himself to the task of improving the condition of the people who had been oppressed by the haughty Sayyids and their minions. "When the State was rid of these thorns", says the Chronicler, "people were happy under the good administration, and they occupied themselves in marriages and festivities, in building good houses, in dancing and processions and they thought of nothing else."

But unfortunately Kashmiris were not destined to lead a life of peace and plenty for long. Soon the relations between Malik Ahmad and Tazi Bhatt were embittered through the machinations of Tazi's step-brother, Nauroz, Malik Ahmad's son. Nauroz unable to brook the prosperity of Tazi, privately accused him before his father. Records Srivara:

"He told him that among all the ministers, Tazi had monopolised the power to confer favours or award punishments to men; that he was haughty on account of the support he received from the people. When his son said these things, Malik Ahmad regarded him with jealousy and was angry with him, though he had been adopted as his son."

But it was not easy even for the chief minister to dislodge Tazi Bhatt. Malik Ahmad had, therefore, to take recourse to a stratagem by which he hoped to get rid of him.

*Expedition Against Tatar Khan*

At about this time Tatar Khan, Bahlol Lodi's governor had established his oligarchy over the people of Northern Punjab, with Sialkot as his headquarters. The Dogras were galling under his yoke and were on the lookout for an opportunity to destroy his power. They had heard with delight the news of the discomfiture and the externment of the Sayyids by the Kashmiris under the leadership of Tazi Bhatt. Repeatedly they applied to the Kashmiris for aid against the forces of their oppressor, Tatar Khan Lodi.

Malik Ahmad in the open court volunteered to lead an expedition in support of their Jammu neighbours and asked the king to allow him to equip an army for this purpose. This was only a ruse, for he well knew that Tazi Bhatt who was eager to undertake some bold adventure, would necessarily take upon himself this risky job. Malik Ahmad's calculations proved correct, for no sooner had he requested the king to allow him to lead the expedition than Tazi volunteered to march out at the head of the army. The king hearing this request and on the advice of Malik Ahmad furnished Tazi Bhatt with an army and sent him out of Kashmir. Tazi's servants followed him with "great din and noise, in fear and in gladness, even as black bees follow their chief."

Malik Ahmad breathed a sigh of relief, for he was certain that Tazi and his army would be utterly defeated and destroyed. But Fate decreed otherwise. Tazi was hailed as a deliverer and a friend by people of Jammu. "When the king of Rajpuri (modern Rajauri) and the men of Madra country (modern Jammu) saw the costly and well-equipped army, adorned with royal insignia, they wondered. The people of Madra, of small stature, were pleased at the approach of Tazi, they became unruly, left their ruler Tatar Khan and came to him, thus causing a division of Tatar's army."

Tazi Bhatt, though born of poor parents showed his worth as a general and a loyal servant throughout the conduct of this campaign. "He reduced many chiefs to vassalage, and performed many deeds of courage and severity and thereby inspired terror in the celebrated kings of Delhi and other places." With the help of the Jammu army, Tazi marched on Sialkot and plundered it.

Malik Ahmad and his son Nauroz were now smitten with jealousy of and hatred towards Tazi. They had already induced the fickle-minded king to entrust the guardianship of the prince to Nauroz. When Tazi heard of this disregard of the King's obligation towards

him, he felt chagrined, more so, when on his arrival from his victorious campaign the king did not accord him due honours. But he had already captured the people's imagination and his countrymen regarded him as a hero. He was feted and cheered by the populace. The king and his chief minister were now in mortal fear of this people's idol. Rarely did the king sleep in the same room consecutively for two nights for fear of being assassinated.

*Sayyids Recalled*

Being unable to do any injury to Tazi, Malik Ahmad planned to bring back his mortal enemies, the Sayyids. In this he was actively assisted by the queen who was the daughter of a Sayyid. Malik Ahmad despatched encouraging letters to them. They were quick to seize this opportunity of reimposing their hold on Kashmir. "They collected their party and came in like swans."

Great was the indignation of the people at this unpatriotic and foolish step taken by the king on the advice of the queen and the Malik. Firoz Damara, a leading public figure appealed to the Malik to desist from this. In vain did he recount before him the evil consequences of this foolish act of his. In vain did he point out that Tazi Bhatt for whose ruin he had resorted to this suicidal plan was actually under his power and was conducting himself like his servant. Malik Ahmad consoled himself with the thought that the Sayyids after having once felt his power would behave in future and would "now become his flatterers."

But in this he was mistaken. As soon as the Sayyids took possession of their former estates, they seized the first opportunity to take revenge upon the people and their leaders. Too late did Malik Ahmad and his son, Nauroz, realise that their jealousy towards Tazi had landed Kashmir in trouble.

The Sayyids now attempted to take their revenge upon Tazi Bhatt. They planned to get him imprisoned and to abduct his wife. Tazi was informed beforehand by his faithful followers of this conspiracy and he went to take shelter in the house of his adopted father, Malik Ahmad, who had by now been reconciled to him. This was quickly misrepresented to the king as an attempt by the Malik and Tazi to form an alliance against him. The king sent his police chief to arrest Tazi. At once the wrath of the people took a violent form. The police party was attacked. The king fearing an open revolt pacified the people by announcing that he was only protecting Tazi against the machinations of the Sayyids and had therefore ordered the police to guard his house. By this clever stratagem the

Sayyids practically shut Tazi Bhatt in his house but he was allowed to draw a sumptuous allowance and pass his days among his family and relations.

### *Fall of Malik Ahmad*

Having put Tazi Bhatt out of their way, the Sayyids now planned to get rid of Malik Ahmad. One day during a drinking bout Ahmad's son, Nauroz, passed some undignified remarks against the king. This was used as a handle to ruin him and his family. Knowing that Jehangir Magrey had since the time of the recall of Sayyids, never forgiven Ahmad and that he was on the lookout for an opportunity to destroy him, the king timed a meeting between him and the Malik in the courtyard of the palace. Facing each other they could not suppress their anger. Jehangir at once challenged his opponent who, drawing his sword, delivered a strong blow which Jehangir narrowly missed. A commotion was raised in the palace and the followers of both the leaders rushed to the scene of the melee. Seizing this opportune moment the people overpowered the police guard at Tazi's house and released him. Mounted on his swift horse and followed by a huge concourse of the disgruntled and oppressed citizens, Tazi reached the palace courtyard in time to turn the scale against Malik Ahmad and his son. The inflamed people set fire to the palace and in a short time the whole locality became an infernal furnace. Malik Ahmad retreated in disgrace. His son was killed and his followers soon deserted him. Immediately the king under the advice of the Sayyids got him imprisoned. All his wealth which he had amassed during the long tenure of his office as prime minister was confiscated. "Ahmad died in prison and the field was now clear for the Sayyids to assert their power in full."

"They became unruly after this triumph, they placed the king under their control and regarded the people of Kashmir scarcely even as grass." The administration fell into unsympathetic and incompetent hands, the only concern of these haughty people was to amass wealth at the cost of the poor peasantry. "Accepting bribes," bemoaned the Chronicler, "was considered by the officers of the State as a virtue, oppressing the subjects was regarded as wisdom and the addiction to wine and women was reckoned as happiness." The people could not, however, tolerate this state of affairs for long. "It was apparent that some revolution was at hand, and this was brought nearer by the insatiating lust for power which the foreigners displayed."<sup>3</sup>

3. Ibid., p. 252.

### *Invasion of Ladakh*

Having completely ruined the economy of the Valley, the Sayyids planned to extend their power to the frontier districts of Ladakh and Baltistan. They sent a strong army under the command of Sayyid Hassan and Jehangir Magrey. The latter advised the Sayyid to launch the attack from two directions — the Burzil and the Zoji passes — in order to create a diversion in the enemy forces. But the hot-headed Sayyid did not listen to this sane advice of the experienced and able Kashmiri general. The result was that after crossing the Zojila the Sayyid's army was surrounded by the Bhauttas "who fell on the rear of the army and destroyed the soldiers." Most of the commanders of the king fell in that war and very few soldiers reached Kashmir to tell their sorrowful tale. Hearing of this discomfiture and defeat of their oppressors, the Kashmiri masses became elated and soon a strong popular resistance force was organised. Jehangir Magrey advised the king to suppress the rising power of the Sayyids in order to win back the loyalty of the people. But the king would not listen. Magrey, however, would not be a party to bad government. "I am going away for the safety of your kingdom as well as of myself. The State is ruined and you ought to save yourself somehow," was his last counsel to the king.

The simmering discontent began to show itself in several small affrays between the Kashmiris and the Sayyids. Suspecting Jehangir Magrey to be a leader of the popular unrest, the Sayyids plotted to get him assassinated, but Jehangir got news of this plot in time and with his troops and near relations went away by "inaccessible roads to Loharkot, a strong fortress on the borders of Poonch."

### *Popular Revolt Suppressed*

From there he established contacts with the disgruntled Kashmiris and awaited developments. The king now became a puppet in the hands of the Sayyids. "He lost all interest in the administration of the Kingdom and remained indifferent to the doings of his servants. His mind was influenced by his wife and the Sayyids, and his own acts became disorderly and reprehensible. Unable to enforce his orders he disliked ability in others and lived only to watch the looks of beloved women. These women were quick in inflicting punishments and bestowed favours on men, and were eager in accepting bribes, and they, not the ministers or the servants, became the intimate friends of the king."<sup>4</sup>

4. Srivara, op. cit., p. 256.



Under such chaotic conditions the plight of the common man can well be imagined than described. The oppressed naturally sought the only remedy open to a brave but downtrodden people. They rose as one against the king and his foreign advisers, choosing the opportune winter months when the movements of the army would be hampered by deep snow and frost. This brought the full might and wrath of the ruling party in play against the insurgents. To crush this revolt "the army headed by the Sayyids scattered itself throughout the length and breadth of the Valley and inflicted untold atrocities on the people. The inhabitants were robbed of their domestic animals and rice and wine and other things; and some of the avaricious servants of the Sayyids killed the people in their own houses. The impotent king was grieved on account of the oppression of the people." While hunting in the forests, he contracted diarrhoea and after a few day's illness passed away in the year 1484 AD.

#### Sultan Muhammad Shah (I) 1484-86

Hassan Shah while on his deathbed fully realised the dangerous and pitiful straits to which Kashmir had been driven. He, therefore, requested his prime minister and father-in-law, Sayyid Hassan, to install one of the two grandsons of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin on the throne, as they were already well up in the affairs of the State. But the Sayyid disregarding the last wish of the king installed Muhammad Shah, the seven year old son of the king from his own daughter, Hayat Khatun. The affairs of the State were virtually carried on by Sayyid Hassan himself. The Sayyids now consolidated their powerful position in the State to the chagrin and mortification of the Kashmiris.

"Haughty in their conduct and cruel in behaviour, these arrogant men, urged by excessive cupidity, oppressed the people even like the messengers of death."<sup>5</sup> They treated the Kashmiri officials, both civil and military, with disdain, refusing them entrance to the court of the king. Bemoans Srivara: "the captains and officers came to their sovereign, they rolled on the ground like dogs, but could not enter into his presence. The Sayyids themselves were unapproachable and the servants and subjects of the king became alienated from them."

#### *A Popular Uprising*

The Kashmiris were not, however, slow in organising their

5. *Srivara*, p. 268.

resources in order to fight the Sayyids. They mustered strong under one banner under the leadership of Saif-ud-din Dar who quickly organised a people's army. To reinforce their strength they requested their friends, the Jammu people, to send them aid. Nor were the latter slow in response. A strong force under the command of Purushuram was despatched to Kashmir to help the popular forces. The spirits of the Kashmiris were very high. Armed men from all parts of the kingdom came to the town to swell the ranks of the insurgents.

"There was a commotion in the city and all the people became excited and ran about with arms. Soldiers came to these divisions every day from all sides, well-officered, devoted to their chiefs, and protected by shields and they received supplies of arrows with wooden shafts and fine feathers, sharp and well barbed."<sup>6</sup>

The Kashmir nobles, with the help of Purushuram's men organised a plot to murder the Sayyid leaders. One night 300 men, including the Jammu soldiers, secretly entered the fort at Naushahar by bribing the guards, and remained in hiding till next morning. When Sayyid Hassan, the maternal grandfather of the boy-king and virtual ruler of the land, came out to hold court, they fell on him, and killed him and some of his kinsmen on the spot. A servant escaped through a drain and informed Sayyid Hassan's son, Sayyid Muhammad, of the tragedy. The latter immediately attacked the fort and occupied it and seized the treasure which he distributed among troops loyal to him.

The Sayyids perpetrated an equally cruel deed. Behram's son, Yusaf, had been thrown into prison along with his father by Hassan Shah and continued to be in confinement. With the death of Sayyid Hassan, the nobles of Kashmir thought it an opportune moment to put a nominee of their own on the throne in place of Muhammad Shah. And who would be more suitable and convenient than Yusaf? So Idi Raina, one of the nobles, tried to secure his release, but Sayyid Ali Baihaqi, a Sayyid dignitary came to know of the plot and he immediately put Yusaf to death. The unfortunate prince's mother, Sobana Devi, who had not seen him for many years, kept his dead body with her for three days and then had it buried. Near his grave she built a hut where she passed the rest of her days in poverty and prayer.

Though the treasury was in the hands of the Sayyids, yet the morale of the people was so high that "heaps of paddy were brought by the villagers and with it the people of Kashmir paid their expenses of living

6. *Ibid.*, p. 277-78.

for want of money." Very soon the popular army captured the whole Valley leaving only the right side of the city in the hands of the royalists.

Elated at his easy victories, the leader of the popular party, Saif-ud-din Dar sent an invitation to Jehangir Magrey to return to Kashmir from his fort of Lohara.

#### *Magrey's Popular Army*

Jehangir who was waiting for a suitable opportunity to assert his power again, quickly returned with his followers and assumed command of the popular army. This struck terror in the Sayyid camp and they attempted to open negotiations with him. They were prepared to reappoint all the former Kashmiri officials and to return them their estates on condition that the insurgents disbanded themselves and sent back their allies, the soldiers from Jammu. But Jehangir was too clever a politician to fall a prey to their soft words. He replied that unless the Sayyids replaced in the treasury the wealth of the State that had been purloined and laid down their arms unconditionally, no negotiations could be opened with them. This finally convinced the Sayyid that the Kashmiris meant business.

They appealed for aid to the Sayyids who were dominant in the Punjab and Delhi. Tatar Khan, who was burning to take revenge on the Kashmiris, at once equipped an army and sent it by the Pir Panjal route. But the invaders got hot reception at the hands of the frontier army under the command of one Habib Raina. Records the Chronicler:

"Surely the Goddess Kali in the guise of the river-Kalidhar devoured them in anger for the benefit of the virtuous State. And when the people of Kashmir heard of the destruction of invaders, they celebrated the event by music, and the faces of the Sayyids became sad. Among the survivors of the wicked army which had met with this disaster, 2,000 lay dead. The rear of the army of the Kashmirians was such as could be relied upon, and so the Kashmirians felt no fear. They became haughty on obtaining an addition to their strength and with a glad heart determined on battle."

The Kashmiri soldiers in the king's army deserted to the rebels and the Sayyids were, therefore, forced to pay handsomely the mercenaries from Muzaffarabad, Kishtwar, Gilgit, etc. "They showered riches on all sides so that even mechanics and cartmen took up arms and inferior servants of the king rode rare and fine horses from the stables."

The two armies faced each other with the river between them. All

the boat bridges were destroyed and the Kashmir boatmen brought the boats to the left bank, robbing the royal army of the only means of making a surprise raid on the insurgents. For two months the city was kept in constant alarm and commotion. The Kashmiri soldiers on the other hand carried out numerous nibbling raids on the enemy. "They hastily crossed the river from one side to another, killed some enemy, cut off their heads and fixed them on poles." The Sayyids in retaliation burned the houses of leading Kashmiri nobles in the city and mercilessly tortured their kith and kin living therein. "Not a day passed in which two or three heroes were not struck with arrows and carried in dying state from the banks of the river to their own houses. Every day was terrible on account of conflagrations by fire and destruction caused by soldiers and other calamities."

#### *Battle of the City*

This state of tension could not, however, last for long. Seizing the initiative the youthful and spirited Saif-ud-din boldly crossed the river at the head of a strong detachment composed mainly of the fierce Dombas, and striking left and right, caused havoc in the city and should have been completely destroyed had the Dombas not given way to the temptation of loot and arson. "They raised their weapons against one another and plundered the principal citizens of their property." Next day the Sayyid army under Haibat Khan rallied again and launched a counter-offensive, delivering strong and massive blows on the disorderly Kashmirian army. Many brave leaders lost their lives in fighting rearguard actions while covering the retreat of their army. Conspicuous for his bravery in this battle was Daud Magrey, the talented and beautiful son of Jehangir. In their attempt to escape to their own camp on the other side of the river, the boat bridge gave way under the stampede when more than 100 Kashmiri soldiers "fell into the river and being heavily weighted by their armour they sank and died in the Vitasta."

Intoxicated by this victory the Sayyids gave themselves up to revelry and to insensate plunder. In their lust for revenge they did not hesitate to murder even the innocent and unarmed citizens. A learned physician, Yavaneswar, respected and honoured by all the Kashmiris was killed in his own house. "They fixed several heads on poles and in order to strike terror into the people they placed them like rows of lamps on a piece of wood on the banks of the Vitasta."

7. *Srivara*, op. cit., p. 289.

"In the meantime the people of Kashmir collected the surviving soldiers from all direction and again raised an army." The commanders then thought out plans to overcome the enemy. Ultimately it was resolved that the army should make crossings at three widely separated points in order to divert the strength of the defending enemy. Consequently one detachment under Saif-ud-din crossed the Jhelum under cover of darkness near Pampore and by making rapid progress surprised the enemy by its sudden appearance in the morning. Another column under Jehangir crossed the river near the Anchar lake and engaged the enemy in the rear. The main assault was launched by Jonaraj with a direct crossing near the middle of the city.

#### *Victory of Popular Forces*

The enemy forces led by Hasham Khan, Firoz Khan and Mir Baqira put up a strong resistance. The royal army was thrown into confusion by the death of the general, Mir Baqira. The Kashmiris pressing forward cut the enemy ruthlessly. The enemy soldiers "with all their might could not overcome the Kashmiris who went on plundering and destroying; and even killed those who had taken shelter on trees; and in this way they entered the city."

An order was issued by Jehangir Magrey to pursue the fleeing generals of the enemy. Mir Hassan rather than surrender himself resisted to the last until he was killed fighting on his horse. Similar was the case with Habib Mir, another leading general. Be it said to the credit of the Kashmiri general, Jehangir, that he issued strict orders not to show any disrespect to the dead bodies of these brave generals but to give them a decent burial. Haibat Khan, at whose hands Jehangir's son, Daud, had fallen, was captured while trying to run away, but could not escape the wrath of the soldiers who killed him there and then. The victorious army looted and destroyed the property of the Sayyids and their followers.

"Then the ministers confiscated all that had belonged to the Sayyids and exiled Ali Khan and others with their families from the State. The ministers of Kashmir were of one mind and Purushuram (the leader of the Jammu contingent) and others received honours and returned to their country. The leading men among the Sayyids had hoped that by bestowing the kingdom on a boy they would enjoy prosperity, and they had accordingly acted in furtherance of their own interests. But now they were destroyed; the Kashmiris obtained by force of arms the posts of ministers which the Sayyids had held so long."

The popular leaders who then assumed the duties of the government held a council in presence of the boy-king and distributed the functions of the State amongst themselves. They applied themselves to the task of repairing the ravages caused by the war. The citizens were given aid in the shape of loans and free gifts of timber, etc., to build their houses anew. The Shah Hamadan Khanqah as well as other temples and mosques were rebuilt at State expense on a grander scale than before. The judiciary and the police were reorganised and the cultivation of crops was encouraged. Great was the jubilation of the people at this glorious victory of theirs.

But Kashmir was not destined to enjoy peace for long. The victory that had been secured with so much bloodshed and misery was frittered away by the ambitious and unscrupulous nobles, who restarted the old game of intrigue and counter-intrigue, with the boy-king, Muhammad Shah, as the storm centre.

Some of the nobles getting jealous of the power wielded by Jehangir Magrey, sent secret messages to Fateh Khan the son of Adam Khan, Zain-ul-abidin's eldest son who, on the death of his father, was brought up by his maternal uncle, the ruler of Jammu. Later Tatar Khan's son gave him protection at his court in Jullundur. When he got the invitation from Kashmir, Fateh left Jullundur and came to Rajauri, where he was joined by some nobles of Kashmir passing their days in exile there.

Fateh Khan was a youth of undaunted valour and perseverance, and bore a good moral character. He was religious, possessed simple habits and was not addicted to wine or gambling. Jehangir Magrey had himself, when living in exile out of fear of the Sayyids, considered Fateh Khan to be the best man to occupy the throne of Kashmir, and had in fact planted the seed of such a desire in Fateh's mind.

But things were different now. Jehangir was all-powerful, with the boy-king Muhammad under his complete control. So when he heard that Fateh was planning an invasion of Kashmir with the tacit consent of his colleagues, he became alarmed and sent him word to desist from taking such an action. Fateh was, however, bent on accomplishing his mission and, in the middle of 1445, entered Kashmir, having won over Masud Nayak, the commander of the Pir Panjal Pass. Reaching Hiranpur he was joined by his supporters from the Valley. A fierce battle was fought at Kalampura between his forces and those of Jehangir Magrey in which, through the personal valour shown by Magrey, Fateh Khan was defeated and he managed to escape to the Punjab. His supporters were hunted

down, seized and imprisoned and their property confiscated.

But Fateh Khan was not a man to give in easily. He again organised his forces at Bahramgala and invaded the Valley the following year. The contending forces clashed on the Nagam *Karewa*. While Jehangir was busy with this fight, Zirak Bhatt, a follower of Fateh Khan, bravely dashed down with a few of his soldiers to Srinagar and managed to release from prison the powerful noble, Saif-ud-din Dar. Jehangir became nervous and requested the Raja of Rajauri to intercede for him and bring about peace between him and Fateh Khan. But this peace lasted for only a few months during which Jehangir by clever diplomacy isolated Fateh Khan and won over his supporters. Fateh again fled and reorganising the remnants of his forces, marched on Jammu which he immediately occupied.

from there he again attempted an invasion, but Jehangir defeated Fateh again. He along with Saif-ud-din Dar, had to retire to Rajauri where the Raja gave them shelter.

Again he tried his luck with a stronger force recruited from the hill tribes of Khasas. Jehangir had meantime become very unpopular owing to the acute distress of the people who had to go without salt and other necessities of life, the passes having been blockaded by Fateh Khan's forces. So when Fateh Khan's forces, under the command of Saif-ud-din reached Damodar *Karewa*, seven miles from Srinagar, they met only a feeble resistance from Jehangir Magrey who was wounded; and deserted by even his Sayyid allies, he retired to the city. His army was dispersed and the king, Muhammad Shah, was captured and kept in close confinement in the palace but provided with all comforts. Fateh Khan was proclaimed ruler and ascended the throne under the title of Sultan Fateh Shah.

#### Sultan Fateh Shah (i) (1486-93)

Fateh Shah signalled his rule with the appointment of his trusted follower, Saif-ud-din Dar, as prime minister. The condition of the State was indeed deplorable. There was complete lawlessness and the Khasa soldiers who had come with him plundered the city, "enjoying at ease for six months what others had saved in their houses with great care."<sup>8</sup>

Fateh Shah tried his best to curb the power of the nobles but was not successful. He became merely a tool in their hands, particularly of

8. *Srivara*, Ibid., p. 335.

Saif-ud-din. Galling under his yoke he sought his destruction with the help of the powerful but intriguing Shams Chak and his three friends Nasrat Raina, Sarhang Raina and Musa Raina.

#### *The Chaks*

It was during these troubled days that the Chaks were establishing their position as the successors to the dynasty of Shah Mir by engaging themselves in complicated but intelligent intrigues, political murders and by raising the religious bogey. Originally of Dardic descent, the Chaks had entered Kashmir simultaneously with the rise to power of Shah Mir. It is a strange coincidence that Ramachandra who gave shelter to Rinchin and Shah Mir took also into service a third fugitive from the Karakoram — Lankar Chak. Being of a powerful build and possessing incredible physical strength, Lankar Chak slowly rose to an eminent position under Shah Mir. He brought in a good number of his followers who settled towards the northern district of the Valley. The Chaks being of a warlike and ferocious nature soon gained ascendancy over the inhabitants of Kashmir who had been reduced to low straits; and their rise to power was so quick and phenomenal that they were already a source of menace to Zain-ul-abidin, who predicted their further victories in the political field of Kashmir. Protected by strongly fortified hill positions in various side-valleys and forests of Handwara district, they carried away precious loot. With the decline of the power of the later Sultans they gained an upper hand at the court and ultimately were successful in usurping the throne and establishing their kingship over Kashmir.

The most powerful personality among them during the period of civil war between Muhammad and Fateh Shah was Shams Chak who is reputed to have possessed a strong physique and unrivalled bravery. Shams Chak, however, gained his powerful position more as a result of unscrupulous intrigues than by merit. Beginning his career under the patronage of the powerful noble, Sayyid Muhammad, he was not slow in changing sides at the latter's fall from power. He continued these tactics during the troublous days of the stampede for ascendancy amongst the various powerful clans till finally he joined the services of Saif-ud-din Dar, Fateh Shah's minister. But even here he would not sit quietly. He won over two more powerful nobles, Musa Raina and Sarhang Raina, whom he set up as rivals to his master Saif-ud-din hoping to advance his ambitions. At about this time he gained considerable power by marrying the daughter of another Chak chief, Hussain, son of Pandu Chak.

With the support of the three Raina nobles, Shams Chak planned the overthrow of Saif-ud-din, and attacked him at a village near Srinagar. In a fierce hand to hand fight Sarhang Raina dealt a mortal blow on Saif-ud-din Dar's head, and was himself killed in return. With the death of Dar, Fateh Shah breathed more freely and rewarded Shams Chak by appointing him as his prime minister.

It was, however, a short-lived peace. Hardly had two years passed when dissensions again broke out among the nobles — this time between Shams Chak and Sayyid Muhammad, supported by Ibrahim Magrey, son of Jehangir Magrey, and Idi Raina. The latter attacked Shams Chak in the vicinity of Bulbul Lankar in Srinagar and defeated him. The nobles then took Muhammad Shah out of confinement and installed him for the second time on the throne of Kashmir.

#### Sultan Muhammad Shah (ii) (1493-1505)

With his restoration to the throne, Muhammad Shah who had now attained the age of 16, appointed his maternal uncle, Sayyid Muhammad, as his prime minister, and Ibrahim Magrey as the minister of revenue and expenditure.

Besides the Chaks we come across another powerful clan, that of Magreys. The Magreys were raised to a pre-eminent position under the rule of Sultan Shams-ud-din who raised the flower of his officers for the army from this clan. During the reign of Sultan Sikandar, his minister, Rai Magrey also rose to power and under the latter Sultan the Magrey clan played an important and decisive role in shaping the political history of the State. The Magreys were staunch followers of the Sunni doctrine and were thus religiously and politically pitted against the Chaks who had adopted the Shia faith.

#### *Shams-ud-din Iraqi*

Apart from the rise of powerful clans and feudal landlords, an event during this period is worthy of notice. This was the appearance in Kashmir in about 1492 AD of a preacher from Talish on the shores of the Caspian, named Shams-ud-din Iraqi who described himself as a disciple of Sayyid Muhammad Noor Baksh of Khorasan and preached a medley of doctrines. He professed to be an orthodox Sunni like most of the inhabitants of the Valley, but the doctrines set forth in his theological work, *Ahwath* or "Most Comprehensive", are described as

"conforming neither to the Sunni nor to the Shia creed." But the preaching of his doctrines ultimately led to the foundation of the Shia sect in Kashmir. And when the Chaks adopted these doctrines wholesale, seeds were sown for outbursts of religious frenzy throughout the rule of the Sultans and after.

According to the unknown author to *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, there was wholesale conversion of Hindus conducted by the Mir in collusion with Musa Raina. Shams-ud-din Iraqi had several devoted followers among the nobles, the principal one being Musa Raina. Sayyid Muhammad who was the *de facto* ruler, did not approve of Shams-ud-din's ideas, and compelled him to retire to Skardu. Musa Raina and the Chaks were greatly incensed at this, and with the help of Ibrahim Magrey raised a rebellion against Muhammad Shah and invited Fateh Shah, who was biding his time at Naushera. Fateh Shah entered the Valley and at Hirapur was joined by the rebellious nobles. In order to crush him, Sayyid Muhammad and the king marched with a strong force to Zainakot, where a sanguinary battle was fought, and Fateh Khan had a reverse. Next day, however, he reorganised his forces and offered battle. Sayyid Muhammad lost his life while fighting bravely and this so demoralised the royal forces that they ran pell-mell, leaving the road to Srinagar open to the victorious army of Fateh Shah. Muhammad Shah narrowly escaped capture and became a fugitive again.

#### Sultan Fateh Shah (ii) (1505-14)

On his ascension to the throne for the second time, Fateh Shah was not slow in recognising the service of Shams Chak and appointed him as his prime minister. But the intriguing nature of another supporter of Fateh Shah, Musa Raina, could not brook the rising power of Shams Chak. And thus the nine years of Fateh Shah's second tenure of kingship were passed in petty intrigues and internecine warfare resulting in untold miseries for the people.

Musa Raina with the connivance of Fateh Shah who was chaffing under the domineering power of Shams Chak, got the latter arrested and thrown into prison, where he was ultimately murdered. Shams, however, atoned for his misdeeds and intrigues by giving a bold and brave fight to his assassins, and unarmed laid low his opponents before he succumbed to the injuries inflicted on his body.

Musa Raina now succeeded Shams Chak to prime ministership.

His first act in office was to recall Shams-ud-din Iraqi from Skardu to preach the Shia doctrine to the people of the Valley. He openly helped him in his missionary activities. This and the manner in which Shams Chak was murdered, resulted in rousing the anger of the other nobles against him; and even though he conducted the administration of the land efficiently, he could not stand the combined power of rival nobles who, headed by Ibrahim Magrey, forced him to flee. He was, however, attacked on the way and killed.

The office of Wazir was then occupied by Jehangir, but he could remain in power for only 40 days, things being made hot for him by a rival noble, Usman Malik, who now became Wazir. The latter was in turn imprisoned after enjoying power for only two months. Jehangir Magrey returned from exile and Fateh Shah had to reappoint him as his Wazir. After only a year, however, Malik Usman who had been freed from prison, started his intrigue against Jehangir and had his two sons arrested. This unnerved Jehangir who again fled to Poonch. Thereupon Usman became Wazir again, and to appease his rival claimants to power, divided the kingdom into three parts, retaining one for himself and handing over the other two to Shankar Raina and Nasrat Raina.

Conditions in the Valley were deplorable at this time. The people were naturally tired of the political uncertainty. The treasury was empty and the economic ruination of the kingdom was nearly complete. The feudal lords were busy in extorting as much money in cash and kind as they could from their tenants and used all their power to suppress their liberties. They established a semblance of government in their narrow territories of which they were undisputed masters. The only class of people, however, who benefited from the chaotic conditions of the times were the martial tribes from the surrounding hilly regions who came down to loot the unfortunate inhabitants of the Valley.

Pitted against one another the three powerful barons could not remain in peace for long. Meanwhile all the exiled nobles patched up their differences and decided to launch an attack on the Valley and restore Muhammad Shah to the throne. A series of battles followed in which the forces of Fateh Shah, divided amongst the three nobles, and without any coordination among them, were defeated. He had to flee. Usman attempted to escape but was captured and later killed in prison. Shankar and Nasrat meekly submitted and were pardoned.

### Muhammad Shah (iii) (1514-15)

Muhammad Shah now became the Sultan for the third time and appointed Ibrahim Magrey as his prime minister. But with the Shia-Sunni differences attaining a sharper pitch there flared up disturbances again. The Chak nobles under Kazi Chak, promising support to Fateh Khan who was related to Chaks from his mother's side, raised a rebellion, and made it easier for him to win a victory over the forces of Muhammad Shah. Without offering any material resistance, the latter again became a fugitive and left for the Punjab. Fateh Shah ascended the throne for the third time.

### Fateh Shah (iii) (1515-17)

Fateh Shah's last three years of reign were as usual spent in intrigues and cross-intrigues of the rival factions. He was a mere figure head, the Chak and other nobles assigning him only the revenues of the crown lands, and dividing the rest of the kingdom among themselves.

In the autumn of 1515, Muhammad Shah with the help of Magrey made another bid to capture the throne, but did not meet with any success. After wandering for nearly two years he proceeded to the court of Sultan Sikandar Lodi and sought and obtained aid from him in regaining the throne of Kashmir. With a force of 3,000 men supplied by Lodi, Muhammad Shah set out for Kashmir. But before his arrival in the Valley serious differences had arisen between Fateh Shah and his three nobles. The latter raised a rebellion and forced Fateh Shah to flee to the Punjab where he died in August 1517.

Muhammad Shah on hearing of these developments decided to leave the Lodi supporters behind in the Punjab, and with only 2,000 of his personal followers proceeded towards Srinagar.

### Muhammad Shah (iv) (1517-28)

On ascending the throne for the fourth time, Muhammad Shah appointed Kazi Chak as his prime minister. He then returned to the Punjab to thank his Lodi supporters and to send back their troops. Meanwhile, the passes were blocked with snow and he had to spend the winter at Naushera.

During his absence, the Valley was plunged into civil war. A hosi

of petty nobles engaged themselves in fights among themselves, turning the land into a veritable bedlam.

During this period Kashmir was passing through a medley of political, economic and religious currents and cross-currents. Across the eastern frontiers, in Central Asia, the Mughals were founding a strong kingdom under Abu Said. Another branch of this dynasty was sending its cohorts over the Khybar to lay the firm foundations of an empire. It was not, therefore, surprising that the Valley should become an inviting prey to these conquerors.

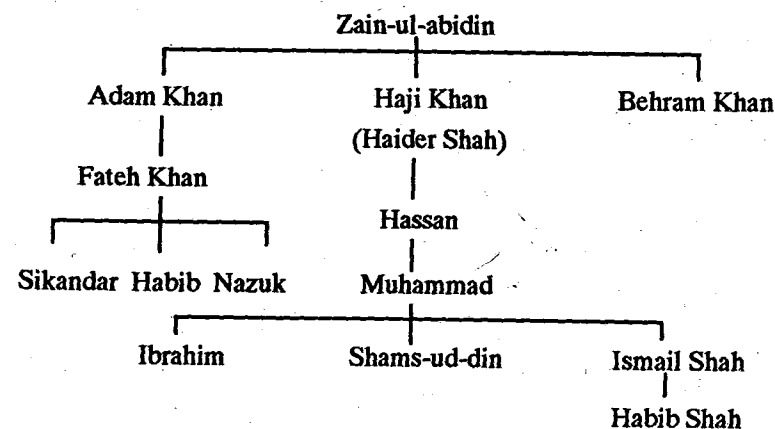
The internecine wars further weakened Kashmir economically. The State depended for some essential commodities on other parts of India and Central Asia, most important of these being salt, textiles and shawl-wool. With a weak government at home the trade routes became vulnerable to attack by unscrupulous hill tribes and bandits, whom the forces of the king could not suppress, ultimately resulting in the complete break-down of the entire economy of Kashmir. Added to this was the rising tide of Shia and Sunni differences which supplied an easy handle to more clever politicians under the Mughals to interfere in the internal affairs of the kingdom. How all these various forces came to a head will become clear with the study of the conflicting and confusing history of the last hundred years of the later Sultans and Chaks.

## 11

### RISE AND FALL OF CHAK DYNASTY

Out of the confusing picture of the currents and cross-currents of the political intrigues at this time, there emerge the personalities of two rival nobles, Malik Abdal the son of Ibrahim Magrey, and Kazi the leader of the Chak clan and hero of many a battle. Besides, there appear on the scene the three sons of Fateh Shah — Sikandar, Habib and Nazuk. Habib died early while fleeing from Kashmir after a defeat at the hands of Kazi Chak. Sikandar was made a tool of by the Magreys and later by Babar, and finally lost his life by torture in prison. Nazuk, however, lived longer to be a puppet in the hands of a Mughal adventurer from Central Asia — Mirza Haider Dughlat — to be ultimately betrayed and forced to flee for his life to the Punjab.

To follow the narrative of the events of this time, it will be convenient to indicate here the relations of the successors of Zain-ul-abidin:



Kazi Chak acquired enough power during these disturbed times to be able to subdue a number of nobles and restore peaceful conditions



in the Valley for some months. But his power aroused resentment among his rivals, particularly Malik Abdal Magrey, who combined together and forced Kazi to leave the Valley and seek shelter at Naushera (1527).

Soon after, however, Kashmir was threatened by an invasion of the Mughals under Kuchak Beg and Ali Beg who were sent by Babar to help Sikandar in securing the throne, but really to bring the Valley under the Mughal hegemony.

Babar had brought Delhi under his sway and was directing all his energies to build an empire. Kashmir occupying an important strategic position could not escape his notice and when he learnt of the internal troubles in the Valley, he thought it to be an opportune moment to fulfil his ambition. The Mughals, inhabitants of a cold country, had an additional incentive to bring the beautiful Valley with its salubrious climate, under their rule: they very much desired to spend the hot Indian summer months there.

Notwithstanding their weakness for intrigue and race for power, the feudal lords of the Valley, however, rallied under the banner of Kazi Chak whose patriotism was stirred. Though he had received no orders from Muhammad Shah, he decided to repel the invasion. He collected a force from the surrounding hill tribes and exiled Kashmiri soldiers, and sent his son, Ghazi, a boy of 18, to conduct operations against the Mughals. Ghazi and his soldiers gave such a tough fight to the forces of Babar that they had to withdraw ignominiously.

This victory over the powerful Mughal army made Kazi Chak a hero to the Kashmiris and he was all powerful. He was reappointed as Wazir and with the popular support behind him he soon dethroned Muhammad Shah and put his son, Ibrahim, on the throne. But he was not left in peace by his opponents. Abdal Magrey his rival who had taken shelter under Babar induced the latter to make another effort for the conquest of Kashmir.

An efficient and compact army was organised for this purpose from Lahore. Having gained a bitter experience in his earlier campaign, Babar made a diplomatic move. He had realised that with all their internal differences the Kashmiris had the knack of joining together and fighting to the bitter end any foreign invader. Babar, therefore, used Nazuk Shah as a decoy hoping to make the Kashmiris believe that it was another attempt from a scion of Shah Mir to gain the throne of Kashmir. Nazuk Shah was declared the Sultan of Kashmir. The trick succeeded and early in the spring of 1528 the rebel chiefs with Nazuk

Shah and the Mughal army entered Kashmir and defeated the forces led by Kazi Chak. Kazi Chak was pursued out of Kashmir by Abdal Magrey who now became all powerful.

Nazuk Shah remained on the throne for only a year and Muhammad Shah was restored in 1530 for the fifth time.

Abdal Magrey then thought it prudent to send away his Mughal allies and when they left with handsome presents they carried tempting tales of the beauty of Kashmir and the opportunities that the internecine warfare among its nobles offered for Mughal intervention and its ultimate subjugation.

Meanwhile Babar died and Humayun succeeded him to the throne of Delhi. His brother, Kamran, the governor of the Punjab, organised a strong military force and set out towards the Valley. With Naushera as his base, he despatched a force of 3,000 horse under Mehram Beg to undertake the reduction of the Valley. Torn by the feuds among the nobles, Kashmir could offer no effective resistance and the Mughals entered Srinagar without a fight and setting it on fire killed the forces who came down from the hills to oppose them.

But soon the Kashmir nobles patched up their differences, invited Kazi Chak to lead them, and launched a relentless campaign of guerrilla warfare. The Mughals were harassed. After only a month and a half, finding it difficult to maintain their hold on the Valley, they entered into a pact with Kazi Chak according to which they agreed to quit the Valley on promise of a safe passage to the Punjab.

After the withdrawal of the Mughals, Abdal Magrey, who continued to be the Wazir distributed large tracts of the Valley among his near relatives. It resulted in bitter and sanguinary skirmishes throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir. While their followers were engaged in cutting one another's throats, a greater calamity was approaching the Valley in the shape of a Tartar invasion from Central Asia.

Conditions in Central Asia had become very confused after the death of Tamerlane. Factions among the scions of the Khan were legion. Wars were on foot on every side; states were being overrun and cities besieged, while rulers arose or went down, almost from day to day according to their fortune in war or intrigue. The Shia-Sunni conflict there also helped to fan the fire of factious warfare. In a brief period of 75 years the whole empire of Tamerlane was fragmented into small principalities ruled over by petty, narrow-minded chieftains.

In such a confusing period a small kingdom was carved out by



Abu Said round about his capital situated at Kashgar. With his daring exploits he attracted a large number of adventurous soldiers and with their help was successful in consolidating his kingdom and leading expeditions to the neighbouring countries.

### Mirza Haider Dughlat

One such adventurer was Mirza Haider Dughlat. Born in 1499-1500 at Tashkent where his father was the governor, he was on the assassination of the latter carried away to Bukhara by his relations. From there he went to Badakhshan and thence, after a year, was brought to Kabul. In his early days he was patronised by Babar, his close relative — their mothers being sisters — and under his care he acquired a great proficiency in literature and the science of war. Full of ambition, he left at the age of 15 the protection of Babar while the latter was still in Ferghana and joined the forces of Abu Said in Kashgar. By dint of his hard labour and intelligence he quickly succeeded in winning the confidence of Abu Said. It was at the instance of Mirza Dughlat that his master undertook the ambitious campaign for the reduction of Ladakh and Tibet. For 19 years till the death of Abu Said, Dughlat served his master faithfully.

In July 1532, Abu Said, his son, Sikandar, and Mirza Dughlat led an army to Ladakh and Baltistan which were easily subdued. While in Ladakh, Abu Said old in age, suffered from the effects of marching over high altitudes and in cold regions. Mirza Dughlat advised his master to remain in Ladakh and himself, at the head of a force of 5,000 cavalry and infantry, made a rapid march to the Valley of Kashmir. The Kashmiris engaged in their chronic internecine warfare were taken by surprise and their frontier guards at the head of the Zojila were overpowered. In the course of a few days Dughlat's troops entered Srinagar, devastating with fire and sword the important towns on the way and frightening the inhabitants of Srinagar out of their homes. The city was sacked and looted and the inhabitants were put to great hardship during the ensuing winter months of January to March 1533.

However, facing their enemy boldly the Kashmiris organised their resistance under Kazi Chak and Abdal Magrey, now united against a common foe. A regular guerrilla warfare ensued. Dughlat's forces, hemmed in a small valley, were drawn out of their dugouts into the open where they were given a crushing defeat. Frustrated and mortified, dissensions broke out in their ranks and Mirza Haider considered it prudent to sue for peace. Accordingly negotiations were opened between

the Kashmir nobles and the Mirza and finally an agreement was arrived at. The Mirza and his forces were allowed to depart from the Valley at the end of May, 1533, by the way they had come. Though the Mirza in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* gives some face-saving explanations, for example "the *khutba* was read and coins were struck in the name of the Khan (Abu Said) and one of Muhammad Shah's daughters was wedded to Iskandar Sultan", the fact remains that the Kashmiris had at a time of emergency given a good account of themselves and rallying their strength under their leader, had driven the invader out of Kashmir.

But even though the Kashmiris gained a signal victory against an unscrupulous foe, the country had suffered such enormous loss that it was really a great problem for the rulers to bring some relief to the unfortunate Kashmiris. As if this was not enough Nature sent them a greater calamity in the shape of a severe famine. Thousands perished of hunger. But fortunately the next crop was a bumper one and saved the remaining population from total annihilation. The Maliks Kazi Chak and Abdal Magrey faced the situation manfully and made strenuous efforts to import foodstuffs from the neighbouring regions of Jammu, Rajauri and Muzaffarabad. All the gold lying in the king's treasury was used in purchasing and carrying these foodstuffs into the Valley. It was during this brief spell of peace that the King, Muhammad Shah, after a chequered reign of 34 years during which period he faced many changes of fortune, died in Srinagar in the year 1537.

Muhammad Shah was succeeded by his second son, Shams-ud-din who like his father, came under the domination of Kazi Chak. Kazi Chak, a shrewd politician gave his daughter in marriage to Shams-ud-din's brother. After only a year's rule, Shams-ud-din died and was succeeded by his brother Ismail, the son-in-law of Kazi Chak.

### Sultan Ismail Shah II (1538-40)

Kazi ruled the kingdom in the name of Ismail. But being flushed with power, his attitude towards other nobles became overbearing. The result was that a regular conspiracy was hatched resulting in Kazi's flight to the Ghakkhar hills. While in exile he received aid from an old ally Sayyid Ibrahim Baihaqi and with his help he returned to power. But conditions in Kashmir had grown worse during his absence. The nobles after driving out Kazi had become powerful and had established their own separate petty principalities, owing allegiance to none. Kazi was unable to bring them under, and he, therefore, followed

the procedure adopted earlier by Fateh Shah and divided the Valley into three equal parts — one part was left under the Sultan, one was given to Sayyid Ibrahim Baihaqi to rule and the third was retained by the Kazi.

The one weakness from which the Chaks suffered was their forcible imposition of Shia doctrines on the people. Kazi was in this respect no better than others. He outdid Musa Raina in the religious persecution of the Hindus and Sunnis. The result was that he and his tribe were hated by a large majority of the Kashmiris. Matters, however, became so hot for Kazi that he was forced to flee from the Valley. There were demonstrations by the people and the Shia localities were sacked. The Chaks retaliated by killing many important leaders of the Sunnis. At last there was an open revolt headed by the Magrey clan, who sought aid from Humayun, the Emperor of Delhi in driving away Kazi.

#### *Mirza Haider's Rule*

Khawaja Haji, who acted as their agent with the Mughals, met Mirza Dughlat (who had after the death of Abu Said taken service under Humayun) at Lahore. Humayun was at this time pressed hard by the forces of Sher Shah Suri and had left Delhi. While in Lahore Mirza Dughlat put before him a plan proposing that Humayun at the head of a strong force should enter the Kashmir Valley (which he declared was so weak that it would offer no serious resistance) and establish there a nucleus of his government. But Mirza Dughlat's plan did not appeal to other councillors of Humayun particularly Kamran. When they heard that Sher Shah had advanced up to the Beas, panic seized them and Humayun then agreed with Dughlat's plan. A small force of 400 men was placed under his command and it was hoped that with the help of the Kashmir nobles he would be able to secure the Valley for Humayun. But before he could reach the outskirts of Kashmir, Humayun gave up the idea of proceeding further and instead fled to Persia. Mirza Dughlat was, however, confident of his success in Kashmir and with his small force entered the Valley by way of Tosamaidan Pass. Helped by the Magreys and the people who were tired of Chak domination, he won an easy victory and occupied Srinagar in October, 1540. Placing Nazuk Shah on the throne, he carried on the administration in his name for a period of 11 years.

#### **Sultan Nazuk Shah (1540-1551)**

Kashmir thus became a pawn on the chessboard of Mughal politics.

With Magreys and Sayyids aiding the Mirza, Kazi Chak fled to Humayun's opposite number, Sher Shah Suri. But the latter was already too busy in consolidating his hard won territory to attend to Kashmir affairs. Kazi Chak after some time married his niece to Sher Shah and thus easily obtained the aid of a force led by Adil Khan to invade Kashmir. But the Kashmiris could not brook the domination of the Chaks any more and Adil's forces were given a crushing defeat by Dughlat. Later another chief of the Chak family, Rigi, organised a rebellion, but had to flee in defeat and join Kazi. Both of them united their forces and marched against Haider but again sustained a heavy defeat which hastened the death of Kazi who passed away in 1544.

Mirza Haider Dughlat now in his matured years ruled the valley on more liberal lines. But the one mistake that he committed was to appoint only his Mughal followers to high posts in the city as well as in the districts. The Kashmiri nobles were deprived of their Jagirs which were distributed among his Mughal followers. The ousted Kashmiri nobles could not for a long time organise a united resistance against him being weakened by internal feuds. The Mirza actually had a mind to add Kashmir to the dominions of Humayun, but the fortunes of the latter being in the doldrums, the Mirza maintained Nazuk Shah on the throne, not daring to take the open risk of facing a united front which the Kashmiris were wont to raise against a foreign usurper.

During the 11 years of his reign, Mirza Haider gave peace and orderly government to the Kingdom. He opened schools and built several mosques in Srinagar with *hamams*, ensuring warm water to the faithful for ablutions even during cold and frosty days of winter. He introduced new types of windows and doors in public buildings and improved the architectural designs. It was as a result of his direct encouragement that many of the industries originally introduced by Zain-ul-abidin were revived. Kashmiris are indebted to his cook, Nagz Beg, for the revival of shawl manufacture. The people with their inherent aptitude for the manufacture of the artistic -cum-utility goods quickly responded to the encouragement extended to them by the Mirza. The trade with Central Asia and Persia assumed huge proportions and in a very short time the people regained the economic prosperity which they had lost after the death of Zain-ul-abidin. In order to make the highroads to these regions safe for the caravans, he subdued Ladakh, Baltistan, Pakhli and Rajauri. An attempt was made to reduce Kishtwar too, but it did not meet with success. He also meted out justice in an impartial manner.

Affected by the malady of the times, Mirza Haider who at first,

owing to political expediency, had been very liberal towards the Shias, let loose an era of persecution and tyranny against them. Whether he honestly believed his Sunnism to be superior to other creeds, or whether he wanted to gain the sympathies of the Sunni population with whose help he had acquired power, is difficult to say. But one thing is certain; this policy of his cost him his position as well as his life.

The self-respect of the Kashmiris had been greatly wounded by the overbearing attitude of the various Mughal officers of the Mirza. They again forgot for the time being their internal religious-cum-political differences and organised a strong uprising under Hussain Magrey.

#### *Mirza's Unpopularity And Death*

The rebels established their headquarters at Khanpur near Rajauri. The Mirza sent his cousin, Qara Bahadur, at the head of an army composed of Mughal and Kashmiri detachments to reduce the fort. The Kashmiri soldiers of Qara defected due to their harbouring a strong resentment against the Mughals. It resulted in the defeat and consequent imprisonment of Qara.

This was a signal for a general uprising all over the outlying hill districts of the kingdom. The Ladakhis killed Dughlat's governor and forced his garrison to flee to the Valley. Similarly the people of Pakhli drove out his governor who was killed along with his troops by the Kashmiris on entering the Valley. Kaka Mir, another commander of Mirza Dughlat, who was sent to Kishtwar met with a similar fate.

All these developments unnerved Dughlat. He rode to Khanpur at the head of a powerful column to punish the insurgents. But he met with further defections from his Kashmiri soldiers. In order to surprise the enemy, he, along with a few trusted followers, made a night attack on the fort of Khanpur. At once there was a tumult in the enemy camp who let go a shower of arrows at the intruders and in the fight that ensued Mirza Dughlat was killed. This led to a widespread rising throughout the Valley and the Mughal garrisons were overpowered and annihilated. Kashmir again reverted to an independent position. Mirza Haider's body was brought to Srinagar where it lies buried in the graveyard of the Sultans of Kashmir.

Mirza Haider was a versatile man, brave and adventurous, and a patron of learning and art. He had at his court several accomplished musicians. Wielding a fluent pen, he wrote several books, the chief being his absorbing *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* which he completed while in Kashmir.

But all his good qualities were offset by his zeal to preserve the Islamic orthodoxy and to ban Shia and Sufi sects. Moreover he never identified himself with the Kashmiris. This naturally made him unpopular with them and weakened his position.

After the death of Mirza Haider the power devolved upon the predominant noble, Idi Raina. Kashmir could not escape the covetous eyes of the rulers of Delhi where now Sher Shah Suri had been succeeded by his son, Saleem Shah. But as before the invader was given a crushing defeat by the Kashmiris who again rallied under a powerful chief, Daulat Chak.

After the defeat of Saleem, Daulat Chak became very popular. Most of the followers deserted Idi Raina which resulted in making Daulat Chak the indisputable master of Kashmir. In 1552 following a rising of some ambitious nobles, he deposed Nazuk and proclaimed Ibrahim Shah as the king. Nazuk finding no supporter of his cause left for the Punjab. Daulat was lenient to other nobles and with their cooperation asserted suzerainty over Ladakh. But the affairs of the Kashmir court did not remain in a stable position for long. Soon a family quarrel started between Daulat Chak and Ghazi Chak. The result was that Daulat Chak who had fallen a prey to communal bigotry was ousted by Ghazi Chak who deposed Ibrahim Shah and installed his brother Ismail Shah on the throne. When, however, the latter died in 1557, he proclaimed Ismail's son, Habib Shah, his own nephew, as the king.

#### **Sultan Habib Shah (1557-61)**

In 1559 Qara Bahadur who, after the extirpation of Mirza Dughlat's forces in Kashmir, had gone to Delhi, was instigated by some Chak relatives of Ghazi to invade Kashmir. Wishing to take revenge on the Kashmiris, he led an army of 10,000 horse and infantry. He was opposed by Ghazi Chak and his Kashmiri forces in the Rajauri mountains. To stir up the Kashmiris to their best efforts he promised them a gold *Mohar* for every head of the enemy's soldiers. It is said that 7,000 heads were laid before him and the Ghazi, who was greatly elated at the success, more than fulfilled his promise and paid two *Mohar* for each head.

But time had now come when the Chaks could do away with the farce of maintaining a puppet on the throne. Ghazi Chak now began to work out his plan. He would accuse the king of various misdemeanours and acts of faithlessness. The Sultan who was powerless could not put forth his

defence. At last one day in 1561 AD, Ali Chak, brother of Ghazi Chak, rebuked the Sultan in open court and taking off his crown placed it on the head of his brother, Ghazi Chak. The courtiers hailed Ghazi as the ruler of Kashmir. Habib was removed from the throne and kept a prisoner.

### Ghazi Shah The First Chak Ruler

Ghazi Chak (1561-63) who thus had the throne of Kashmir was in the beginning of his career as king a very discreet person. He devoted his attention to the removal of various evils prevalent in the State. He was particularly careful to rehabilitate the finances. Due to various factors, political and natural, the treasury had become empty. He established a semblance of peace and reconquered some of the former territories of the kingdom, notably Skardu, Gilgit, Kishtwar and Pakhli. To these he deputed intelligent and able governors.

Ghazi Chak is known as a ruthless dispenser of justice. A single instance will illustrate this trait in his character. Once a servant of his son, was caught plucking fruit in an orchard. The king ordered his hands to be cut off. This incensed his son who became very sullen. The king asked his uncle Malik Muhammad to admonish him. The boy in a fit of rage attacked his uncle and inflicted mortal blows on him. He ordered his son's arrest and after a short and summary trial sentenced him to death. To put his subjects in awe, he further ordered his remains to be exhibited on the gibbets for seven days.

But the chronic malady of internal strifes could not be uprooted by even such a strong ruler. Soon a rebellion was organised by his kinsmen Nasrat and Yusuf Chak. The king, however, put it down ruthlessly. The then head of Idi Raina's family, Shams Raina, went to Humayun to seek aid from him. But the day he reached Delhi, Humayun died as a result of a fall. Shams Raina thereafter went to and sought aid from Abdul Mali the favourite of Humayun. Mali had incurred the displeasure of Akbar and had been arrested and sent to Lahore. From there he managed to escape and take refuge in the Ghakkar country. Mali who was already planning an invasion was further encouraged by Shams Raina. They both invaded Kashmir but were severely defeated.

Ghazi Chak though a stern ruler, led a life of frugality, and was a poet too. But he was afflicted by the fell disease of leprosy which increased in extent so much that he had to abdicate in favour of his brother, Hussain Chak. He ordered his household effects to be auctioned,

but these fetched so little that he was angered and wanted to re-ascend the throne to exert his authority. He was, however, checkmated by his brother Hussain and died of a broken heart when his son's eyes were put out by the latter.

### Hussain Shah (1563-70)

By the time Hussain Shah Chak ascended the throne the bitterness in the relations between the Sunnis and Shias had greatly died out, so much so that Hussain Shah appointed Sayyid Habib, a Sunni jurist from Khwarizm as the Qazi of Srinagar and Preacher at Jama Masjid. He also gave complete religious freedom to Hindus and used to participate in their festivals like Sripanchami. The king was a pious man and devoted three days out of the week to religious discourses. He was very fond of music. Occasionally he went to hunt, more for pleasure than for real game. He reorganised his army and took his officers into close confidence.

He sent his brother Shanker Chak, as governor, to Rajauri. While there Shanker raised an army from the martial tribes of that place, and with this marched against his brother in Srinagar. The king's able and devoted minister, Malik Muhammad Naji, with great pluck and diplomacy was successful in defeating this brother of the king.

Towards the end of Hussain's rule in 1568-69 the Shia-Sunni differences assumed formidable proportions, no doubt helped by the machinations of the Imperial Government at Agra. Yusuf Mandav, Shia, flushed with the power wielded by his co-religionist, the Chaks, attacked the chief Sunni Moulvi, Qazi Habib. He was arrested and was sentenced to death by the Qazis (Islamic jurists). The order was carried out and Mandav was mercilessly stoned to death in public. This enraged the Shias who clamoured for the punishment of the Qazis who had passed the sentence of death on Mandav. Meanwhile Akbar had sent two envoys, both of Shia faith, to induce Hussain to acknowledge his suzerainty. While in Srinagar Mirza Muqim, the Imperial envoy actively interfered in the Mandav affair and asked the governor, (or district magistrate) of Srinagar, Ali Koka, to hand over the Qazis to the Shias, he latter dragged them through the streets and executed two Qazis, Mulla Firus and Mulla Yusuf Almas.

Meanwhile Hussain Shah who treated Akbar's envoys with great respect, sent them back with presents for the Emperor and also sent his daughter for marriage to Prince Salim. But before they could reach Agra, several Sunni nobles and Maulvis from Kashmir had hurried to the Imperial Court and narrated the sad tale to Akbar. The Emperor

was highly incensed and ordered the arrest and death of Mirza Muqim and sent back Hussain Shah's presents and his Daughter to Srinagar. This rebuke from Akbar grieved Hussain Shah who died shortly after. But even before his death the struggle for the throne had started. Ali Khan his brother headed a rebellion and the king abdicated in his favour.

#### Ali Shah (1570-78)

Ali Khan ascended the throne under the title of Ali Shah. He was a pious man and without any sense of bigotry. Imbued with the desire to end the senseless rancour among the followers of the two creeds Ali Shah appointed Mubarak Baihaqi, a Sunni, as his prime minister. The latter was essentially a man of peace and was instrumental in getting the pardon for some Sunnis who had been condemned for their rebellious acts. Ali Shah held the great Sunni saint Hamza Mukhdoom in great respect, as also the scholar-diplomat, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi.

Ali Shah attacked and defeated Bahadur Singh the chief of Kishtwar who sent his daughter in token of his submission for Ali Shah's grandson, Yaqub, to wed. It was because of this relation that Yaqub got refuge at Kishtwar when he was defeated by the imperial forces of the Mughals during the latter's invasion and conquest of Kashmir.

Early in his reign he had to suppress a revolt raised by his son, Yusuf. The youthful prince had treacherously murdered his cousin, Aiba Khan, Ghazi Shah's son, as he too was a claimant, Yusuf, instigated by evil advisers, defied his father. But ultimately they got reconciled to one other.

Meanwhile Akbar was extending his influence over Kashmir. Unwilling to attack the Kashmir forces in their impregnable mountain fastnesses, he resorted to diplomacy. In July 1578 he sent Sadr-ud-din and Maulana Ishaqi to Ali Shah's court. The envoys so pleaded their master's cause and so overawed Ali Shah with the stories of Mughal power that he ordered the *Khutba* to be read in the Emperor's name and sent Hussain Shah's daughter for Salim to wed.

The last and the only attempt by the Shah Miris to regain the throne of Kashmir was made by Haider Khan and Saleem Khan, sons of Nazuk Shah. They were helped by some nobles from Kashmir and receiving promises of help from disgruntled elements, they set out with a force towards the Valley to contest the throne. Lohar Chak and Muhammad Chak arrested Lohar and handed him over to the pretenders and himself

promised them help against the king. Lulled thus to a false sense of security, the pretender's forces were surprised and attacked by Muhammad Chak while they were on the way to Rajauri. Saleem was killed and Haider managed to escape with his life.

In 1576, a severe famine occurred in Kashmir which lasted for three years. The severity of the famine was so terrible that more than half the population of Kashmir was wiped off and many cases of cannibalism are recorded in the annals of the times.

Ultimately in 1579, the king while playing polo in the Id Gah grounds received a fall and the pommel of the saddle pierced his abdomen. But before he succumbed to this injury he got his son, Yusuf Shah, crowned Sultan of Kashmir.

#### Yusuf Shah (1579-86)

The life of Yusuf Shah Chak is as romantic as it is tragic. Born in an environment of dynamic events, he strangely enough led a life of voluptuousness. He was an accomplished scholar and a master of music. The natural beauties of Kashmir had so bewitched him that he would spend months in roaming on its beauteous mountains and flowery meadows. He transformed Gulmarg and Sonamarg into holiday resorts. When as a result of the sudden death of his father he was called upon to assume the duties of a king, he found himself incapable of shouldering such a heavy responsibility. Neglecting the duties of the State he enjoyed his life in the company of a large number of musicians and dancing girls.

In his youth he had married a simple but romantic rustic girl Zooni, later known as Habba Khatun. She was a melodious singer and a poetess too. She wielded a great influence over the king and with her powers of sweet and silent persuasion tried to reform him and induce him to attend to his kingly duties. But before this could produce tangible result, the people of Kashmir had lost confidence in their romance loving king, and under Muhammad Baihaqi, the wise and noble prime minister, launched a movement to force Yusuf to abdicate and leave the administration in the hands of his ministers. Yusuf Shah, however, answered their demands by an armed attack, but being unpopular with the people and the army; his efforts proved ineffective and he had to flee out of the Valley and seek shelter at Naushera, beyond the Pir Panjal pass.

For a period of six months Baihaqi assumed the rulership of the

kingdom. He led a very simple and frugal life and in order to win public support, he sold the gem-studded crown and the royal parasol and distributed the money amongst the poor. He carried on the administration wisely and did his best to restore peace and tranquility to the land. Not wishing to found a dynasty of his own, he abdicated in favour of Lohar Chak who ruled for 13 months more.

Meanwhile in January, 1580, Yusuf Shah who had made some abortive attempts to regain his throne, was presented to Akbar at Agra by Raja Man Singh whose help he had sought while in exile at Lahore. The Emperor was highly pleased since he was on the look-out for an opportunity like this. Yusuf Shah formally sought Akbar's aid. A Mughal army under the command of Raja Man Singh was despatched to Kashmir. While on the way to his homeland, Yusuf was smitten with remorse at inviting the forces of Akbar to his aid. He realised that once the imperial troops landed in the Valley, the administration would be seized by the Mughals and he would be a mere puppet in their hands. Telling the Raja that it would be more discreet to hide the fact of the Mughal aid to him, he proposed that he would go ahead alone to sound the feelings of the people in Kashmir. The proposal appealed to the Raja, and Yusuf at the head of a small band of his Kashmiri followers left for the Valley. Before reaching its outskirts he, with the help of his minister, Muhammad Bhatt, was able to enlist a small army of 4,000 from the hill tribes. He crossed the river Jhelum a few miles above Baramula avoiding a clash with the main army of his opponents. Making a rapid march he entered Srinagar triumphantly. Abdal Bhatt the intriguing minister of Lohar Chak was killed and the latter sought safety in flight. And thus after an exile of a year and half Yusuf again established himself on the throne. He hunted down ruthlessly his opponents and those who were captured were killed or mutilated mercilessly.

Meanwhile Man Singh waited in vain at Lahore for the invitation to come from Yusuf to enter Kashmir. When he was convinced of the trick played on him, he naturally harboured a sense of revenge against Yusuf. Soon, however, an opportunity presented itself to make a show-down against the latter, Yusuf Shah neglecting again the affairs of the State made it easy for his opponents to rise against him. There were serious defections among his ministers and nobles. The revolt was led by Haider Chak, but Yusuf's faithful minister, Muhammad Bhatt, suppressed the rebellion. Haider fled and took shelter with imperial interests in Kashmir, bestowed upon him Bhimber and Naushera in Jagir.

### *Mughal Invasion*

Meanwhile Akbar who was laying his claim on Kashmir because it had been conquered by Mirza Haider Dughlat in the name of Humayun, continued to take active interest in the political developments in the kingdom. On his return from Kabul, towards the end of 1581, he sent envoys to Yusuf Shah demanding his personal homage to the Emperor. Yusuf Shah instead sent his younger son, Haider, with costly gifts to the Imperial court. After a year Akbar sent another summons to Yusuf Shah, through his son Haider and the Kashmiri poet, Sheikh Yaqub Sarif, to present himself at the court. The demand was repeated by envoys sent by Raja Man Singh from Lahore. Yusuf Shah got frightened and this time sent his heir-apparent, prince Yaqub to the Imperial Court. But when he was presented there, Akbar became furious and complained that Yusuf was neglecting his duties as ruler and was deliberately avoiding to come and pay homage to him personally.

And, therefore, when the Emperor left for Kabul in August, 1585 to effect its settlement, he deputed two envoys from Kalanaur to Yusuf Shah, demanding his presence immediately before the Emperor. Again Yusuf Shah vacillated. The political situation worsened when Yaqub who was travelling with the Emperor's camp, escaped and reached Srinagar by a circuitous route. On hearing this the Emperor ordered an immediate invasion of Kashmir.

On December 20, 1585 a strong force of 5,000 horse under the Command of Raja Bhagwan Das, marched against Kashmir from Attock via the Jhelum valley route. Prince Yaqub and other nobles implored Yusuf Shah to organise a stiff resistance to the Mughal invaders. The ease-loving king had, however, realised the futility of such a course against the might of the Mughal empire. But his views were not shared by his hot-headed son and the Kashmir nobles in general. And when the Mughal army reached the entrance to the Valley, it met with a stiff resistance at the hands of the Kashmir army. Yaqub with his youthful dash, pluck and organising ability, inflicted such hard blows on the benumbed foe that Bhagwan Das could make no progress and apprehending the annihilation of his forces, he opened negotiations with Yusuf Shah and his son Yaqub.

The Mughals agreed to withdraw their army completely. Yusuf Shah would retain the throne, but the coins would be struck and *Khutba* recited in the name of the Emperor. Bhagwan Das persuaded Yusuf Shah to proceed to Attock with him where, he assured him the Emperor would bestow his kindest regards on him and also would ratify the

treaty. Even though warned by his son against taking such step, Yusuf Shah went to Attock where he was presented to ratify the agreement and ordered Yusuf's imprisonment. This was a violation of the agreement according to which Yusuf Shah, after paying homage to Akbar, was to return to Kashmir. Raja Bhagwan Das considered it a slight to him and with his traditional Rajput chivalry attempted to end his life by suicide. When Akbar reached Lahore, he placed Yusuf under the charge of Todar Mal. After two and a half years, on the intervention of Raja Man Singh, he was released and granted a *mansab* of 500 horse. Man Singh took him along with himself to Bihar, where pining for his beloved wife, Habba Khatun, he died in September, 1592 and was buried at Biswak in the Patna District.

Thus ended the life of one of the most cultured rulers of the Sultanate period. Fond of music, dance and poetry, Yusuf Shah was a tolerant king and abolished all exactions levied by previous rulers on non-Muslims. He did not demand *corvee* from villagers and boatmen. Though not possessed of personal valour, he displayed dash and promptness in suppressing revolts at the time of his accession to the throne. The manner in which he recovered his throne after his first banishment, shows his skill in military strategy and diplomacy. He, however, realised early that with the rise of an imperialist power at the centre, Kashmir, in spite of its natural defences, could not hold for long its independent status, and all his attempts were devoted to avoiding bloodshed and chaos that would follow the adoption of an unrealistic attitude to an inevitable fate. But he could not convince, and convert to this view, his nobles and subjects and hence his tragic end.

#### *End of the Sultanate*

It, however, took some more time and sufferings for the people to realise the fact which Yusuf Shah had already done. Yaqub Shah, on the withdrawal of the Mughal forces declared himself free of the obligations flowing from the agreement and struck coins in his name. He appointed Muhammad Bhatt, his father's minister, as his chief adviser. But things were again made hot for Yaqub. Given to fits of alternate rage and quietude, he neglected the duties of the State. A ruthless policy of terror was let loose against the Sunnis. A saintly and pious person, Qazi Musa, was done to death on his refusal to mention the name of Ali in all public prayers. The Sunnis though suppressed for some time rose in revolt under the leadership of an eminent theologian, poet and writer, Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi. Since the general population of the country was reduced to

abject poverty, and lawlessness ruled supreme, Sarfi and his advisers thought it best to invite Akbar to Kashmir to put an end to the chronic internecine warfare.

Assured of full support from the majority of the Kashmiris, Akbar made a third attempt at the reduction of the kingdom. An experienced and well trained army under the command of Qasim Khan invaded Kashmir via the Pir Panjal pass. Guided by Haidar Chak and Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, the Mughal army met with little resistance, the wardens of the passes surrendering at its approach. It was, however, at Hirapura that Yaqub offered some resistance, but having lost the confidence of his subjects, he had to flee and on October 14, 1586 the Mughals entered Srinagar in triumph. Kashmir thenceforth became a province of the Mughal Empire and the chapter of its long independent status came to a close.



## KASHMIR UNDER THE MUGHALS

**T**he Mughals or Mongols, inhabitants of the vast steppe-land of Central Asia, were a race of warlike nomads. Their chequered history is dominated by the exploits of the great conqueror, Genghis Khan, who brought under his banner the various Mongol tribes and clans and established a vast empire extending almost all over Northern Asia. The neighbouring peoples and countries stood in constant awe and dread of his untiring Mongol hordes. It was in the 13th century AD, that the rich plains of Northern India felt the severity of Genghis's scourge when he carried fire and sword to its towns and villages.

After Genghis Khan the branches of the parent tree spread out in different directions. He had four sons among whom the territories of the empire were distributed. Mirza Haider Dughlat in his *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* writes:

"In assigning his dominions to his four sons, Genghis Khan appears to have followed an ancient Mughal custom. The sons of a chief usually ruled, as their father's deputies, over certain nations or clans, and at his death each received, as an appanage, the section of the population which had been under his care. Thus the distribution was rather tribal than territorial, and the tribes, which were in most cases nomadic, sometimes shifted their abode, or were driven by enemies to migrate from one district to another..."

In this way various branches of the Mughal dynasty shot forth. The Mughals who established their famous empire in India belong to the "Chaghatai branch of Mughal dynasty", after the name of Genghis's second son, Chaghatai Khan.

But in reality they were the descendants of Timur, the Central Asian Turkish king who claimed the Central Asian Mongols as his parent stock and Genghis as one of his ancestors. For, the Mongols lost the purity of blood through inter-marriages with other tribes and this



holds true of the 'Mughals of India'. Writes Elias in his translation of the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*:

".....It will hardly be disputed that not alone Babar himself, but some of his more immediate ancestors, were to all intents and purposes Turks; and this was the case not only in the acquisition of language and manners, but by intermixture of blood; while his successors whose portraits, painted in India, are extant at the present day, show no trace in their features of descent from a Mongoloid race. It is said that Babar's grand father (Sultan Abu Said of Khorasan, 1452-67) was described by a Khiwan contemporary, who visited, him, as a very handsome man with a full beard and unlike a Mughal."<sup>1</sup>

Political history of the nations of the world during various periods affords interesting comparisons in the events taking shape at some stage or the other of their socio-political evolution. India on the eve of the Mughal rule is unmistakably compared by observers with England on the eve of the rise of the Tudors. The people of both countries were smarting under the oppression of feudal lords who were heading for supremacy over one another and the king at the centre was but a puppet in their hands. India of those days was just a conglomeration of independent states with a nominal head at the centre whose jurisdiction was circumscribed within the four walls of his headquarters. For example in Northern India, areas like Bengal, Bihar, Jaunpur, Kashmir, Multan, Sindh, Malwa, Gujarat, and Mewar were independent while in the Deccan there were two independent states of Bahamni and Vijaynagar. This era of medieval aristocracy of Afghans, as it is called, lasted over three centuries in India commencing from Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1206 AD and culminating in 1526 when Babar the Mughal defeated the last of the Afghan rulers, Ibrahim Lodi, in the battle of Panipat. Ibrahim Lodi a cruel and inefficient king was unable to govern the country and subdue the warring feudal lords. He could not undo the wrongs committed and administrative blunders made by his predecessors from time to time. The government was theocratic. Religious heads were in the forefront of all the administrative activities. Religious persecution on the part of rulers was one of the main reasons for their losing the sympathies of the suffering people who joined hands with other disgruntled elements and rose in revolt against the existing cruelties inflicted on them. Ibrahim adopted high-handed measures to put down their risings. This further

1. Elias and Ross. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, p.79

aggravated the trouble resulting in widespread discontent and unrest.

One of the most vicious legacies of this time was the Jagirdari system which continued even long after the end of the Mughal rule in India. These Jagirdars, like the barons of the pre-Tudor period were a source of constant menace to the ruler whom they could give a united front and dethrone and oust any moment. India at that time needed a strong central government which would put down all these warring elements and consolidate afresh the shattered fabric of a united India — politically and economically.

A change of rules was thus the demand of the day. And with the stepping in of the energetic Mughals on the soil of India, an era of peace and plenty was ushered in. It was during the rule of the first five Mughal emperors that India saw again a political unity from the north to the south, brought about no doubt by reconciling the different elements in society.

And with this movement for the consolidation of small kingdoms and principalities into a vast empire, Kashmir could not for long retain its isolated position. Its natural beauty and strategic position attracted early the attention of Babar, the founder of the Mughal empire in India.

#### Earlier Attempts at Conquest

But even prior to Babar's victory at Panipat in 1526, Kashmir had caught the imagination of the Mughals. Timur's armies while on their march to Hindustan touched its borders. Sultan Sikandar who was then occupying the throne of Kashmir, accepted him as his liege lord and in token thereof sent him two elephants in gift. On his way back to Samarqand, Timur overran Jammu, and while on the borders of the Valley, he stated:

"I made enquiries about the country and city of Kashmir from men who were acquainted with it, and from them I learnt that... Kashmir is an incomparable country.. In the midst of that country there is a very large and populous city. The rulers of the country dwell there. The buildings of the city are very large and are all of wood, and they are four or five storeys high. They are very strong and will stand for 500 or 700 years. A large river runs through the middle of the city. The inhabitants have cast bridges over the river in nearly thirty places".<sup>2</sup>

2. *Autobiography of Timur*, pp.96-97.

So when Babar established his rule in northern India, he cast his longing eyes on Kashmir, which was passing through a period of political instability, misrule and religious schism. The repercussions of the victories of Babar in India were naturally felt in Kashmir too, then under the rule of a scion of Shah Mir. The general state of conditions as prevailing in the kingdom then calls for a brief mention.

The period covered by the Sultanate was, with the exception of the rule of Shihab-ud-din, Qutb-ud-din and Zain-ul-abidin, in no way a happy time for the people. The government, centralised in the person of the king, was weak and loose. The later Sultans particularly lacked administrative talent and were puppets in the hands of the power-hungry nobles who used them to gain their own ends, and who were busy with their feuds. The puppet Sultans were made or marred in a day. A dominant noble would at his sweet will even lift the crown off the head of the king and place it either on his own or on that of a person of his choice without the slightest hesitation or compunction. Witness, for example, the action of the powerful noble, Ghazi Chak. He accomplished the feat of this type of 'coronation' without any show of formality or shedding of even a drop of blood. Could there be a greater proof of the effeminate nature of the later rulers of this dynasty?

With the end of the rule of the dynasty of Shah Mir, the Chaks came into power. Their rule lasted for a brief period of 25 years, when the kingdom came under the hegemony of the Imperial Mughals in 1886. The Chaks though brave fighters in the field lacked administrative and political skill, and managed to occupy the throne by sheer force of arms and intrigue. That Kashmir could retain its separate existence in the face of the rising power of the Mughals was due more to its geographical situation and the setbacks that the Mughals received under Humayun than to its political or armed strength.

Babar entered India at the invitation of Daulat Khan, Rana Sanga and others who were at loggerheads with the king of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, whose trouble was due largely to maladministration. In the same way the Mughals took advantage of the internal disturbances in Kashmir. With the rising tempo of Shia and Sunni conflicts in the narrow precincts of the Valley, the Mughals made early attempts to take advantage of the weak rule of Sultan Muhammad Shah (1517-28 AD). Babar's army, under the command of Kuchak Beg and Ali Beg marched on Kashmir ostensibly to help a pretender to the throne of Kashmir, but really to bring it under his direct rule. It was repulsed by the redoubtable fighter Kazi Chak, who placed patriotism above personal

interest and power politics. Next year, however, Babar got another pretext to invade Kashmir, when a powerful but disgruntled noble sought his help to restore him to power. An efficient and compact force was deputed from Lahore and helped by the internal feuds, the Mughals easily won a victory and were induced to leave the Valley only on payment of a large ransom and tribute.

The attempt to annex Kashmir was continued by the successors of Babar. In 1531 during the reign of Humayun, Kamran (Humayun's brother and governor of the Punjab), marched with a large army into Kashmir. The Kashmir nobles notably Chaks and Magreys mustered all their strength and presented a solid front to the invaders. A fierce battle ensued between the Mughals and the Kashmir forces under Sultan Muhammad Shah (iv). The Mughals had to retreat in disorder. But a few years later (1540 AD) when Humayun was driven out of Delhi by the superior forces of Sher Shah Suri Kashmir, which had resisted the more powerful armies of Babar and Kamran, came under the *de facto* rule of a handful of Mughal commanders led by Mirza Haider Dughlat.

We have already traced the rise to power of Mirza Haider under Sultan Abu Said of Kashgar and his invasion of the Valley at the head of his master's contingent of 5,000 cavalymen. They marched into Kashmir over the Zoji-la route. In the beginning they met with very little resistance and they moved on. Then a very fierce fight was given to the Mughal invaders by the Kashmiris. It resulted in great bloodshed and destruction and ultimately both sides came to terms. Mirza Haider describes the event:

"The Government of Kashmir was, at that time, conducted in the name of Muhammad Shah. Among the Maliks of Kashmir, after Ali Mir, who was killed (in an engagement with us), there were Abdal Makri, Kazi Chak, Lahur Makri and Yak Chak. When terms of peace were proposed they were very thankful, but they did not credit (our good faith), wondering how people who had once conquered such a beautiful country, could be so senseless as to give it up."

"In a word the *Khutba* was read and coins were struck in the exalted name of the Khan. The revenue of Kashmir, which was due to the Mughals, we took. One of Muhammad Shah's daughters was wedded to Iskandar Sultan. And everyone, according to his rank, formed a connection (*mulakat*) with one of the Sultans or Maliks of Kashmir. I, for example, became connected with Muhammad Shah, and in accordance with the Mughal practice we called each other "friend". Similar (rela-

tions) were established between Mir Daim Ali and Abdal Makri; Mirza Ali Taghai and Lahur Makri; Baba Sarik Mirza and Kazi Chak; my uncle's son Mahmud Mirza and Yak Chak. Numerous presents and offerings were interchanged."<sup>3</sup>

Mirza Haider and his army returned leaving behind them a trail of misery and destruction in the form of derelict, hungry and uprooted population. Mirza Dughlat, however, left the service of Kashgar rulers on the death of Abu Said, and joined Humayun, who was a close relation of his. Here another opportunity presented itself to the Mirza to bring Kashmir under the direct rule of Humayun.

Sultan Shams-ud-din II (1537-38) who came to the throne of Kashmir was, as usual, under the domination of the powerful noble who shaped the fate of the Sultans of this period — Kaji Chak. He was the virtual ruler except for the title. His highhandedness embittered the feelings of the people and the Magreys were busy intriguing against him. This state of affairs continued for a few years until the reign of Sultan Ismail Shah II (1538-40) when dissension again set in among the nobles of Kashmir. The Magreys appealed to Mirza Haider for help against the Chaks and Haider advised Humayun to seize this opportunity and conquer Kashmir.

But Humayun was at that time facing a stiff opposition from the armies of Sher Shah Suri, who ultimately forced him to flee from Agra to Lahore. While there Mirza Dughlat proposed that Humayun along with his harem and devoted followers proceed to Kashmir and set up the nucleus of his government there, but Kamran did not agree. Later, however, when the Afghan forces of Sher Shah became more aggressive and Humayun had to abandon Lahore, he asked Mirza Dughlat to proceed to Kashmir with a small force and secure the Valley for him.

Mirza Haider writes:

"At the time when the general assemblage took place in Lahur, Haji carried many messages to and fro, between myself on the one hand and Abdal Makri on the other, in furtherance of my plan. All terminated in a most desirable way, and I was thus able to impress it strongly on the Emperor. I showed him the letter which had been sent to me, and he became convinced that Kashmir would be conquered as soon as I should appear there."

So the Mirza advanced into Kashmir and helped by Magrey con-

quered it with ease. True to his master he neither installed himself as the ruler of Kashmir, nor thought it expedient to declare Humayun as the overlord, as the latter had virtually lost such a position. Instead he installed Nazuk Shah of Kashmir as the Sultan under, of course, his regency. Haider deserves credit for this act of sagacity and fidelity.

Some territories were added to Kashmir. In the beginning Mirza Haider endeavoured to undo the wrongs caused by the constant feuds and religious persecution which had become the bane of Kashmir for nearly a century. It must have certainly been very difficult for Mirza to do much in this direction in a short time as centuries-old evils could not be done away with in decades. Nevertheless, he did try to raise the economic condition of the people which was fast deteriorating. But while trying to set up orthodox practices in religion, he ruthlessly suppressed the followers of the Shia faith, who were mostly the Chaks, his political opponents. Matters came to such a pass that the Mirza had to face a strong opposition and lost his life in one of the skirmishes.

Mirza Dughlat's exit from the scene marks the end of the rule of Shah Mir's dynasty and beginning of the rise of the Chaks to power. During their brief rule the kingdom witnessed a general deterioration in the political and economic condition of the people, and outbursts of religious frenzy. The Chaks were great fighters but lacked political wisdom. As administrators they were very weak. The Mughal attempts to conquer Kashmir were helped by the deteriorating internal condition of the Kingdom and Akbar who had already subjugated the surrounding territories took advantage of this weakness. Kashmir fell into his hands as a result of something short of fair military conquest and some of his actions in this drama are not above reproach. Forster, a traveller who visited the Valley two centuries later observes:

"Akbar subdued it; aided more, it is said, by intrigue, than the force of his arms. Kashmir remained annexed to the house of Timur for the space of one hundred and sixty years..."

The handle to extend his influence was supplied by the Sunni-Shia conflict raging in Kashmir under the Chak Sultans. They presented petitions and appeals for aid to the Emperor at Agra, and Akbar entertained and received well the deputations of Kashmiris that waited on him from time to time. He promised active support to them with the ultimate aim, of course, of conquering the kingdom. His personal interest in the sorry state of Kashmir affairs became marked during the reign of Hussain Shah Chak (1563-1570) when internal dissension was at its

3. *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, English translation. p. 441.

highest. He deputed his envoys to Kashmir to make an enquiry into the trouble. The Sultan received them well and offered them presents and agreed to give his own daughter in marriage to Akbar's son Salim. But Akbar who was enraged at the persecution of the Sunnis and the delay in the conquest of Kashmir, could not be appeased by even such a humble gesture. He refused the presents of Hussain Shah and his daughter. This insult is said to have shocked the Sultan to death. Later in the reign of Hussain Shah's brother, Ali Shah Chak, the presents and Hussain Shah's daughter were accepted but only when the Sultan recognised Akbar as his overlord. The Mughal attempts at conquest continued till the year 1586, when Bhagwan Dass and other generals were commanded by Akbar to march into Kashmir. Akbar did not personally march at the head of his army, but sent his trusted men to accomplish the deed. Kashmir was then ruled by the ease-loving king Yusuf Shah Chak who being a weak ruler could not keep in check his warring nobles or suppress the Sunni-Shia conflicts of which the people were very much tired. Helped by the inclemency of weather and the natural defences, the Kashmir forces succeeded in halting the advance of the mighty but cumbersome Mughal army. The Mughal general Baghwan Dass appealed to Yusuf Shah Chak to come to terms. Yusuf Shah agreed and was invited to the Mughal camp. He went in good faith, was taken to the imperial court, only to be imprisoned. In the meantime his son Yaqub Khan came to the vacant throne.

During Yaqub's reign, there was still greater unrest due to religious persecution of the Sunnis. The people could no longer stand this cruelty and some leading persons like Sheikh Yaqub Sarfi, an eminent scholar of his time, and Baba Daud Khaki headed a deputation to the Mughal court. They apprised the Emperor of the situation in the kingdom. He promised to redress the grievances of the oppressed people. They got assurance from the monarch that their basic rights and demands would be upheld. They were assured of religious freedom and freedom in their internal affairs. There would be no forced labour as was prevalent in Kashmir for centuries. They were assured that the nobles who brought ruin to the Sultans of Kashmir, would no longer be tolerated in the Mughal regime.

This was a tempting invitation and a welcome offer which Akbar would not miss. So disgusted were the people with the weak and inefficient rule of the kings that they preferred a strong rule from the Centre, even though it meant the loss of their independent but isolated position. They were not disappointed, as the advent of the Mughal rule ushered in an era of peace and prosperity.

Akbar sent his general Qasim Khan in the year 1586 to invade Kashmir. Yaqub Khan, the last Chak Sultan took flight as his ranks got depleted by wholesale desertion of his followers.

Though Qasim Khan had won the day and occupied the capital, he was not left in peace. It took a long time to effect the pacification of Kashmir and the suppression of the resistance offered by the Kashmiris to Mughal domination.

#### *Resistance from Kashmiris*

Yaqub Shah, as we have seen, had fled to Kishtwar at the defeat of his forces by Qasim Khan, but the Raja of that principality, Bahadur Singh, who was his father-in-law, did not approve of his giving in till the last. Taunted by Bahadur, he returned to the Valley and collecting a number of devoted followers, launched a surprise raid on the forces of Qasim Khan, who were by then feeling uncomfortable with the advent of winter. Meanwhile Shams Chak, another powerful scion of his dynasty was contesting every inch of the territory occupied by the Mughals. Yaqub's small army from the south and Shams's from the north of Srinagar had thus taken the benumbed Mughal forces between the prongs of a vice which was being tightened every moment.

From Yaqub Shah's headquarters at Chandrakot and Shams Chak's seat at Sopore, small parties of raiders would make surprise attacks on the Mughals in the city and carry off their rations and equipment. Qasim, in order to end this menace, sent a strong contingent against Yaqub at Chandrakot, but the latter learning of this in advance, moved down to launch an attack on the Mughal headquarters at Srinagar. A bloody battle ensued and Qasim had to abandon the palace, which was reoccupied by Yaqub. Elated at this success against the mighty Mughals, Yaqub ordered the execution of Hussain Khan who had been proclaimed as king by a section of the rebels at Hirapur. Yaqub committed another act of indiscretion. He announced that he would kill all those who had deserted him in the battle against Qasim when he initially invaded Kashmir. This at once alienated some of the more influential lords who became apprehensive of meeting a dire fate at Yaqub's hands.

Learning of these serious defections in Yaqub's camp, Qasim launched a strong counter-offensive and Yaqub had to flee again for his life.

By that time the winter had taken the Valley in its cold grip, and both Yaqub and Shams Chak repaired to their places of refuge — the

former to Kistwar and the latter to the hills of Karnah. The less important nobles like Hussain Khan and Muhammad Bhatt, thinking the resistance to the might of Akbar futile, surrendered to Qasim who, after giving an assurance of pardon and personal safety, sent them to the court of Akbar at Agra.

In the spring of 1887, the fighting was resumed. Yaqub returning from Kishtwar set up his headquarters near Avantipura, to the south-east of Srinagar and Shams Chak occupied Sopore again. For some time daily skirmishes were taking place in the city. Mughal army was practically besieged in their barracks. Ultimately Qasim Khan came out in full force against Yaqub but suffered a reverse. Encouraged by this victory Shams Chak also moved nearer to Srinagar and encamped at Hanjik to the west of the city.

Qasim Khan now moved out in person against Yaqub and encountering him near the hill of Sankaracharya, inflicted a defeat on him. Yaqub had to flee for his life, but being a hard nut to crack, he approached Shams Chak for an alliance against the Mughals. Shams readily agreed and both of them launched a severe attack on Qasim Khan's forces, inflicting a crushing defeat on him.

Taking shelter behind the fortifications of the city, the Mughal army was subjected to relentless pressure by the Kashmiris. They carried out night attacks on the city itself in which they took away their horses, equipment and supplies. Qasim Khan became very much dejected and submitted a petition to the Emperor, requesting him to send an abler commander to replace him, admitting thereby his failure in pacifying the province.

Akbar, thereupon, despatched a strong army under the command of Yusuf Khan Rizvi with two Kashmiri nobles, Baba Khalil and Muhammad Bhatt, to guide and assist him in the reduction and administration of the Valley.

Learning of the march of a mighty force to reinforce the Mughal army in Kashmir, Yaqub planned an attack on it in a defile near the Pir Panjal pass. But most of his followers had by then realised that the might of Mughal Imperialism was too much for them and it was therefore prudent to discretely lay down their arms. This demoralised the rest of Yaqub's followers and thus the Kashmiri resistance forces were completely disintegrated. Yaqub went in disgust to Kishtwar, while Shams Chak retired to the hills in Karnah.

Yusuf Rizvi was a clever diplomat and an able administrator. He

adopted a policy of conciliation and won over many chiefs. Against Shams Chak he sent a strong force which defeated his followers and compelled him to retire to the hills. Another force was sent against Yaqub who had meantime come back from Kishtwar. Yaqub made a brave stand against the Mughal forces, but finding defections rampant in his camp, he again escaped to Kistwar. Thereupon Shams Chak surrendered to the Mughals, having become convinced that it was futile to put up a fight against the superior forces of the Mughal Emperor.

### *Yaqub Surrenders at Last*

It was only in 1589, on Akbar's first visit to the Valley, that Yaqub Shah decided to give up the struggle and submit. Accordingly he returned from Kishtwar and towards the end of July paid personal homage to Akbar, who pardoned him and sent him to Raja Man Singh at Rohtas. Here he was kept a virtual prisoner lest he escape again and create trouble for the Mughals in Kashmir. On his father, Yusuf Shah's death, Man Singh transferred his rank to him and allowed him to draw the allowance from his Jagir. While proceeding to his Jagir, he was offered poisoned betel leaves by Qasim Khan who claimed to be a son of Yusuf Shah Chak, and Yaqub's brother. He ate the leaves and by the time he reached Behira in Bihar, he died (Oct. 1593). His body was carried to Biswak and buried there near the grave of his father, Yusuf Shah.

With all opposition crushed effectively, the imperial rule of the Mughals was ushered in with the first visit of Emperor Akbar to the Valley in the summer of 1589. Says Dr Stein:

"Akbar's conquest marks the commencement of modern history of Kashmir..... Though the conservative instinct of the population was bound to maintain much of the old traditions and customs, yet the close connection with a great empire and the free intercourse with other territories subject to it necessarily transformed in many ways the political and economic situation....."

The people enjoyed a fresh quantum of peace and goodwill after the rigours of medieval rule characterised by oppression, mal-administration and unrest. No doubt Sultan Zain-ul-abidin's reign was an exception but generally the condition of the people was all but happy under the rule of the previous kings.

### *Kashmir Becomes a Mughal Province*

The Mughals ushered in an era of expansion, consolidation and

construction. The "Subha of Cashmeer," records Abdul Fazl in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, "composed of Kashmir, Pakhli, Bhimber, Swat Bijore, Qandahar, and Zabulistan," with Kabul as its capital. It became part and parcel of the vast Mughal empire, and shook off the centuries-old isolation and seclusion. Its natural beauty attracted people from all over Asia. It was a great highway of Central Asian trade which flourished during this period. The Mughals were great builders and administrators. They paved the way for national unity by following a policy of secularism and consolidated India into an organic whole by introducing a sound pattern of administration. Sir Jadhunath Sarkar enumerates the salient features of their rule in India thus:

- "(a) The uniform administrative type throughout the Subhas;
- (b) one official language; (c) one uniform system of coinage; (d) an all-India cadre of higher public services, the officers being transferred from province to province every three or four years; (e) the frequent march of large armies from province to province and;
- (f) deputation of inspecting officers from the central capital."

The Subha of Kashmir was placed under the control of a Subhedar appointed by the Central Government. He was answerable to the Centre for any lapse in administration. True, the pattern of the Mughal administration was unit-wise and each unit was controlled by the concerned head and the work of administration was thus conducted smoothly, but the Subhedar had to follow a uniform code of administration and law set up by the Centre. Accordingly the Subha of Kashmir like other Subhas comprised a good number of Sirkars, each under the control of a person called the Kotwal. The Kotwal had to look after law and order, public welfare, sanitation, etc, in his assigned area. The officer in charge of the collection of revenue in the Srikar was called the Mansebdar. Besides, he administered justice. But criminal cases were very rare. According to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, 'although Cashmeer is populous, and money scarce, yet a thief or a beggar is scarcely known amongst them.'

The Mughal Subhedars deputed to Kashmir, with the exception of a few, were good administrators and looked after the welfare of the people, particularly as the Mughal emperors who often visited Kashmir took special interest in this Subha and its people. They were enamoured of its charm and glamour. All the Mughal emperors craved earnestly for the welfare of the people of Kashmir. Bernier writes: "It is not indeed without reason that the Mughals call *Kachemire* the terrestrial paradise of the *Indies* or that *Ekbar* was so unremitting in his efforts to wrest the sceptre from the hands of its native prince. His son *Jehanguyre* became

so enamoured of this little kingdom as to make it the place of his favourite abode, and he often declared that he would rather be deprived of every other province of his mighty empire than lose *Kachemire*." Enjoying a privileged position the people of Kashmir gradually grew to be conscious of their rights and even a slight grievance of theirs would arrest the attention of the Central Government forthwith. In this connection George Forster who visited Kashmir in 1783 writes:

"The interests of this province were so strongly favoured at the court, that every complaint against its governors was attentively listened to, and any attempt to molest the people restrained or punished."

### Akbar

Akbar's reign over Kashmir lasted 19 years. During his reign Kashmir was ruled by four Subhedars. Chronologically they were:

Mirza Qasim, 1586-87;  
 Mirza Yusuf Khan Rizvi, 1587-1590;  
 Muhammad Qulich Khan, 1590-1601; and  
 Mirza Ali Akbar, 1601-1606.

We have seen that Mirza Qasim's regime of one year as the Subhedar of Kashmir passed in facing armed opposition from Yaqub and Shams Chak. He had thus no time or opportunity to conduct a smooth administration. It was only under Yusuf Khan Rizvi that the Mughal institutions in administration were introduced.

The people were happy under him. Yusuf Rizvi engaged himself in undoing the evils of the past regime and subduing the last remnants of the warring elements which were still present in the province. Two years after its conquest, Akbar personally visited Kashmir. This visit was not merely for pleasure but had deep significance in so far as he studied the political and administrative set-up of the Subha and took personal cognizance of the people's wishes and demands. The Emperor was hailed by the people of all communities, young and old, with joy. His presence at a time when the people had just emerged from the lean centuries of distress and discord, warmed up their hearts with new hopes and promises. The contemporary chronicler Suka gives an eye witness account of the event in these words:

"Now Jyalaladina came to see the kingdom of Kashmira

adorned with saffron, walnut, fruits and flowers. The wives of the citizens hastened to see the king. One woman pointed out the king to her beloved female friend who was anxious to see him; another exclaimed with a flutter that she had seen that leader of the army; another woman with threats to her child (who wanted to drink of her milk) covered her breast and went (to have a view of the king). After the people of Kashmir had seen the sovereign, a continuous festivity was held in every house."<sup>4</sup>

The Emperor made a signal announcement at the very outset, assuring the people that he would redress all their grievances. He graciously abolished all distinction based on religious sentiment. In the time of the Chak rulers, the Sunnis were persecuted and the Brahmins could perform their religious practices on payment of taxes, fines and other tributes. Akbar removed innocuous exactions and thus established practically the brotherhood of man. In this connection Suka records:

".....For the preservation of his sacred thread a Brahmana annually paid a tribute of forty *panas* to the king... Now when king Jyalaladina learnt of the condition of the Brahmanas, he repealed the practice of levying fines on them, which had prevailed since the time of the kings of the house of Chakka. He announced that he would without delay reward those who would respect the Brahmanas in Kashmira, and that he would instantly pull down the houses of those who would take the annual tribute from them....."

The emperor further endeared himself to the Kashmiri Pandits when he proceeded to Martand, according to the chronicler Suka, distributed cows adorned with pearls and gold to his new Brahmin subjects

The presence of the Mughal soldiers in the city was very much resented by the people. These soldiers caused great distress to them harassing and insulting them at every turn. This came to the notice of Akbar who ordered a new town to be constructed, away from the civilian population, where his soldiers and attendants would dwell. The chosen site was the Hari Parbat hillock where the town was built. It was called Nagar Nagar and was whitewashed and very well decorated. The place presented a sharp contrast to the existing capital which, as ill luck would have it, got burnt as soon as the new town was formally occupied by the Emperor's soldiers. The people were, however, a good deal relieved of the inconvenience caused by the soldiers. In the words of Suka: "When the Yavanas had gone out of the old city the people had a festivity; they always blessed king Jyalaladina, and

4. Kings of Kashmira

were happy."

Nor was this all. This Emperor announced that no soldiers would inflict any loss on the cultivators and there are instances when the Mughal Subhedars under the direction of the Emperor took severe action against those who harassed or in any way disturbed the peace of the Valley.

On one occasion Mirza Laskara the son of Yusuf Khan saw a soldier putting people to trouble. He at once ordered that the soldier be arrested forthwith. His men failed to trace out the culprit. But in order to strike terror in the minds of others so as an incident like this might not be repeated, he ordered a boat laden with logs to be set on fire in the middle of the river Jhelum. This action certainly told well in so far as the people were struck with fear and awe, thinking that he had burnt the culprit alive in the boat.

Akbar's first visit to Kashmir produced some notable results. In was, for instance, at his suggestion that some of the boats in the Valley were transformed into residential boats very nearly resembling the modern houseboat. He gave a fillip to several industries, particularly to shawl manufacture. After spending six weeks in the Valley, Akbar left by the Baramula route. Mirza Yusuf Khan, the governor of Kashmir accompanied the Emperor to Agra. His cousin, Mirza Yadgar, was kept in charge of the new province.

#### *New Revenue Assessment Resented*

While in Kashmir, Akbar found that the revenue assessment of the Valley was not in line with that prevailing in the rest of India. Consequently, he thought, the state revenues fell far short of the paying capacity of the Kashmiris.

Mirza Yusuf Khan had already reported that the assessment which he had proposed was too high. But he sent two officials, Qazi Nur Ullah and Qazi Ali, to investigate the question and to carry out revenue settlement of the Valley on the lines of Todarmal. On reaching Kashmir, they found the local officials uncooperative and the people sullen. They could not carry out their settlement and complained to the Emperor against the officiating governor, Mirza Yadgar and his subordinates. Akbar, thereupon, sent two more officials Hassan Beg and Sheikh Umra to assist Qazi Ali in his work.

Since very early times the whole of the land in Kashmir was considered as the property of the ruler. Some portions of the *Khalsa*

5. Ibid, p. 420.



land were granted in Jagir for various period. "Although formerly the government was said to take only a third of the produce of the soil, yet in fact the husbandman was not left in the enjoyment of near one-half." Qazi Ali confiscated all the Jagirs and overrating the State's share of the produce, raised the assessment to more than half of the produce. He moreover, fixed the pay and emoluments of the officials and soldiers in cash, as against the prevailing custom of making payment in kind (grain). The new assessment was resented by the Kashmiri nobles as well as by the Mughal soldiers posted in the Valley. The Mughal officials and military commanders were convinced that if the centre persisted in levying revenue at enhanced rates, little or nothing would be left for them and their troops and encouraged by personal jealousies between Mirza Yadgar and Qazi Ali, they rose in arms and elected as their leader Mirza Yadgar, the governor's cousin, who assumed the royal title and caused the *Khutba* to be recited in his own name. Qazi Ali and Hassan Beg, who were forced to flee, were attacked by the rebels. Qazi Ali lost his life while fighting on the outskirts of the Valley but Hassan Beg managed to escape and reaching Agra narrated the sad tale to the Emperor.

To nip the mischief in the bud, Akbar immediately despatched three strong army contingents to suppress the revolt. Zain Khan led his army through the Jhelum valley and Sadiq Khan over the Tosamaidan pass. The third force was despatched via Jammu. Not content with having taken these strong measures, Akbar decided to proceed to Kashmir in person. A strong army was mobilised and on 3 July, 1592, the Emperor left Lahore for Kashmir by the Pir Panjal route. At Bhimber he learnt that the forces which he had sent in advance had dispersed the rebels at the foot of the pass and that the imperial cavalcade could now safely cross into the Valley. Mirza Yadgar, mustering a small force, was planning an attack on the Mughal forces at Hirapur, but most of his commanders deserted to the imperial side. He was captured and put to death and his head was presented to the Emperor, who advanced and on 14 October entered Srinagar. Mirza Yusuf Khan resigned professing himself unable to administer the province under the enhanced assessment, and the whole province was, therefore, classed as crown land and was placed under the charge of Khwaja Shams-ud-din, who had charge of the finances of the Punjab.

While in Kashmir, Akbar held a grand *Durbar* and distributed in alms the gold and silver with which he had weighed himself. Thousands were fed at his expense for a number of days. He dealt heavy punishment to the insurgents, and bestowed riches and rank on those who

had remained loyal to him during Yadgar's rebellion. To strengthen his hold on Kashmir, he married a daughter of Shams Chak, and his son Salim, took a daughter of Hussain Chak into his harem.

Due to the misgovernment of the kingdom by the Chak rulers, the plight of the people was pitiable. To give employment to the poor and starving people, Akbar ordered the construction of a bastion wall round the Hari Parbat hill, and also a palace and a city inside the fortifications.

It was an administrative necessity that brought the Kashmiri Pandits into the imperial governing structure. With long traditions as administrative servants, they had turned to mastery of Persian over a century prior to Todar Mal's decision to make Persian the court language.

Hence there was a massive recruitment of Pandits to the imperial administrative service which made it easy for the settlement of land and assessment of revenue entrusted by the emperor to Todar Mal. Previously Qazi Ali had fixed, the revenue at 3,063,050 *Kharwars*. Todar Mal fixed the revenue at 3,079,543 *Kharwars*, out of which 10,153,301 *Kharwars* were to be paid in cash. "Although", writes Abdul Fazal, "this settlement exceeds that of Qazi Ali, but calculating at the present rate, the amount to be collected is actually less by 860,342 *dams* because the Qazi overrated the money *Kharwar*."

After staying in the Valley for more than three months during which he visited several health resorts and saw the saffron in blossom, Akbar left via the Jhelum valley route. From Srinagar he went by boat to Baramula, passing over the Wular lake and feasting in the island-palace of Zain-ul-abidin. Apart from strengthening his hold on the Valley, this visit afforded the Emperor a clearer picture of the economic possibilities of his newly-acquired territory and also the cultural heritage of its inhabitants. Akbar and his successors who were great patrons of art and literature thenceforth held the Kashmiris in great respect.

#### *Quli Khan as governor*

On his arrival at Lahore, Akbar appointed Muhammad Quli Khan as the governor. The new governor found still some live embers of rebellion among the scions of the Chak dynasty and influential nobles. Moreover, the people in general, though having peaceful times, had not yet taken to the overlordship of the Imperial Mughals. Quli Khan hence adopted a policy of ruthless suppression of unruly elements, and the conciliation of peace-loving subjects. The Chaks who had not yet reconciled themselves to Akbar's overlordship were his special targets of punishment. He



did not spare even Shams Chak and Hussain Chak whose daughters were taken by Akbar and Salim in marriage, and when they showed signs of unrest and rebellion, had them beheaded by the soldiers of Mulla Jamil.

Quli Khan supervised the building of the great wall round Hari Parbat and the royal palace. The city inside the wall was also growing fast. More than 200 skilled workers were sent from India and the total cost of the construction came to 11,000,000 (Akbarshahi). The local labour was paid well and no *corvee* was levied.

When after eight years the fort and the new palace were completed, Quli Khan invited the Emperor to pay a third visit to Kashmir. In July 1598, Akbar arrived in Srinagar via the Pir Panjal pass after visiting the famous health resorts of the southern district of the Valley. Father Gerome Xavier, a Navarese of high birth, and Benoist de Gois the first Europeans to visit Kashmir, accompanied Akbar this time. Short sketches of the Kashmiri people were recorded by Father Xavier which were published in Antwerp in 1560. It appears that the Valley was then in the grip of a severe famine. Harrowing tales of the devastation and misery resulting from this calamity were recorded by the Portuguese Priest Pierre du Jarric in his interesting account of Akbar and his court.

### *The Great Famine*

The severity of famine was aggravated by the influx of Akbar's large retinue. The Emperor, however, did all in his power to institute relief measures. Thousands of maunds of foodgrains were imported from Pakhli, Bhimber and Western Punjab. Nearly a lakh of people were fed daily in the Idgah. Huge public works by way of building forts, roads and canals were undertaken to provide employment to the starving population. Fortunately the crop that year was abundant and the famine conditions abated.

The Emperor inaugurated the new city and named it Nagar Nagar. There were several luxurious palaces in the city. To celebrate the inauguration of Nagar Nagar and also the end of the famine, Akbar participated in the festivities connected with the birthday of the Vitasta in the same manner as Zain-ul-abidin used to do. On the 13 of the bright fortnight of Bhadun, both the banks of the river were illuminated with thousands of tiny lamps and the king went out on the river in a luxurious barge specially made for the occasion. The hills round Srinagar and the houses, illuminated with lamps and torches, afforded a picturesque scene. At the end of the festivities the emperor held a *Durbar*.

### *Subjugation of Ladakh*

It was during Akbar's third visit to Kashmir that he seriously planned to bring Ladakh and Baltistan under his rule. But since Kashmir was passing through a time of severe famine, and there were not enough food reserves to last for the duration of the campaign, the invasion was not mounted, and instead Akbar sent his envoys to the Raja of Ladakh to accept his suzerainty. But before the envoys could reach Leh the capital of Ladakh, the Chief of Baltistan, Ali Rai, in conjunction with the chief minister of Ladakh, Aju Raj, brought Ladakh under his subjugation. This incensed the Emperor and calling a reinforcement of 3,000 cavalry and 500 musketeers from Lahore, ordered an attack on Ali Rai. On the approach of the Mughal forces the chief took to his heels and without firing a shot Baltistan and Ladakh were occupied by the Mughals.

With the advent of winter Akbar and his retinue left for the warmer plains of India after spending more than three months in the Valley. In 1601, he recalled Muhammad Quli Khan who had put in 11 years of service as the governor of Kashmir.

Quli Khan under whom Kashmir was completely pacified, was succeeded by Mirza Ali Akbar. The latter had not much to do by way of reform, the line and pattern of administration having already been set by Quli Khan. Under Ali Akbar, however, there were several unfortunate outbreaks of epidemics and the Valley was devastated by famines and floods which occurred frequently. The Emperor, however, sent supplies of grain from Lahore and Sialkot which mitigated their severity. It was in Ali Akbar's fourth year of governorship that the Emperor Akbar breathed his last in 1605 AD.

### *Jehangir*

Jehangir who succeeded his father Akbar, had fallen in love with the natural beauty of Kashmir since the day he paid his first visit to the Valley in the company of his father in 1589. A great Mughal par excellence, he was at the same time a man of scholarly habits and a lover of natural beauty. A spirit of scientific enquiry, though cramped by the empirical knowledge of the middle ages characterised his principal pastime, namely, observation and collection of flora and fauna.

Jehangir had a number of sojourns in Kashmir. The primary object was undoubtedly that of health or as the Irish poet Thomas Moore puts it in the *Lalla Rookh*, to fly "from power and pomp, and the trophies of

war". But this also enabled the monarch to indulge in his love of nature, to feast his eyes and to quench his thirst for knowledge. Some of the florid passages in his memoirs *Tuzk-i-Jehangiri*, record the beauties of the Valley of Kashmir. For instance,

"If one were to take to praise Kashmir, whole books would have to be written. Accordingly a mere summary will be recorded."

"Kashmir is a garden of eternal spring, or an iron fort to a palace of kings — a delightful flower-bed, and heart-expanding heritage for dervishes. Its pleasant meads and enchanting cascades are beyond count. Wherever the eye reaches, there are verdure and running water. The red rose, the violet, and the narcissus grow of themselves; in the fields, there are all kinds of flowers and all sorts of sweet-scented herbs more than can be calculated. In the soul enchanting spring the hills and plains are filled with blossoms; the gates, the walls, the courts, the roofs are lighted up by the torches of banquet-adorning tulips. What shall we say of these things or of the wide meadows and the fragrant trefoil?"

Jehangir and his versatile queen visited Kashmir several times and spent the hot summer months in its delightfully cool valley and mountain meadows. His presence naturally prevented any abuse of power by the governors who administered the kingdom. For Kashmiris Jehangir's reign is synonymous with justice and fair play. He would personally look into the grievances and demands of the people and pass suitable orders on the spot. Mirza Ali Akbar the last governor under Akbar's rule, continued to occupy the post for three years after Jehangir's accession to the throne. He was followed by five incumbents of the office, namely, Hasham Khan (1609-12), Sardar Khan (1612-15), Ahmed Beg (1615-18), Dilawar Khan (1618-20), Iradat Khan (1620-22), Itqad Khan (1622-33).

Excepting for the last governor, Itqad Khan, all others were broad-minded and lovable persons. They conducted the administration of the province efficiently and carefully looked after the well-being of the people.

#### *Plague And Fire*

It was during the governorship of Ahmad Beg in 1615 that an epidemic of plague broke out in a virulent form. In a few days thousands of people died in the Valley. There was no remedy then available to combat it, and the epidemic subsided by itself after a few weeks.

Another calamity fell on the people when more than 12,000 houses were destroyed in a conflagration in Srinagar. The Jama Masjid which was also reduced to ashes was rebuilt at State expense.

The period of Dilawar Khan's governorship, though very brief, is notable for laying out of gardens and building palaces and pavilions. His name is still borne by a garden in the heart of the city of Srinagar, on the banks of a lagoon formed by the backwaters of the Dal lake.

#### *Conquest Of Kishtwar*

Kishtwar which was still maintaining an independent status was conquered during Dilawar Khan's governorship. He marched on the principality with a large army. The remnants of the Chak leaders and forces had made Kishtwar their headquarters, and they still cherished the dreams of reoccupying Kashmir and establishing their rule there. Dilawar Khan was aided by his sons Jamal, Jalal, Hassan, and his brother Haibat. While Dilawar Khan led the main force against the Raja, Jamal, Jalal and Haibat marched on from different directions. A fierce fight ensued and one of the Chak leaders named Aiba Chak who was fighting ferociously on the side of the Raja was killed in action. The Raja was defeated and made prisoner, and brought before the emperor in Srinagar. The emperor was highly pleased with Dilawar Khan's exploits and expressed his appreciation by granting him one year's revenue from Kishtwar in reward. On his return to Agra in the autumn of 1620, he took Dilawar Khan along with himself, appointing Iradat Khan in his Place.

Iradat Khan followed the fashion of the times in laying out a delightful garden on the outskirts of Srinagar.

Jehangir, the great lover of natural beauty as he was, could not but come under the spell of Kashmir. Wherever he found a hill coming down gently to a spring or a grove of chenars, or a beautiful lake, he utilised the place for planting a pleasure garden. He took to the systematic planting of the *Char Chenari* or a chenar tree planted at each of the ordinal points so as to produce shade at whichever point the sun may be. The massing of flowers, the construction of miniature pleasure houses entirely subservient to the garden design, and constructed right across the water channel through which the spring water was drawn, was the chief plan of the garden adopted by him.

Shalamar and Nishat, laid out on the slopes of the mountain coming down on the eastern bank of the charming Dal lake are perhaps the best gift from the Mughals to the people of the Valley.

The Shalamar garden was laid out by the emperor in the years 1619. The Nishat Bagh was laid out by Nur Jehan's brother Asaf Khan. The famous springs of Verinag and Achhabal, with their natural gushing waters were dressed up by the Mughals who gave fine artistic shape to these natural objects. In 1620 Jehangir got an "octagonal tank of sculptured stones" made round the spring at Verinag. Nur Jehan was similarly attracted by another spring, at Achhabal, six miles from Anantnag. A beautiful garden with fruit trees and running fountains was laid out by her near the spring. The garden was called "Begamabad" and also "Sahibabad".

Jehangir was not, however, carried off his feet by the natural attractions of Kashmir. He was equally moved by the suffering and pain brought on human beings by Man himself or by Nature. He set himself to the task of stamping out pernicious customs of Sati, infanticide, forced conversions among either community and the like. In some areas of the kingdom the Muslim women like their Hindu sisters used to end their lives at the death of their husbands. They were buried alive along with the dead bodies just as the Hindu widows burnt themselves in the funeral pyre of their husbands. Girl babies were killed at their birth. Such heartless and cruel customs touched the soft chord of the emperor's heart. He forthwith put a stop to these inhuman practices. It was reported to him that in some hilly parts there existed the custom of inter-marriages between Hindus and Muslims. A Hindu could marry a Muslim girl and vice versa. Jehangir did not approve of it, and he prohibited the marriage of a Muslim girl to a Hindu. Some of the iniquitous taxes like the Rasumi-Faujdar were also abolished by him. No wonder the Valley flourished under Jehangir. The revenue from the province rose to 74,670,000 *dams*, a sure sign of the prosperity of the people,

Itqad Khan, who occupied the gubernatorial chair for more than 11 years was a cruel tyrant, and his harsh treatment of the people marred the otherwise golden record of Jehangir's rule in Kashmir. He instituted some exacting levies, as for instance, free supply of fruit to government officials, provision of free labour by villagers for carrying the luggage of the governor and his retinue, etc. Above all he tyrannised over the Shia sect. He struck such awe among the people that they dared not complain against him to the emperor.

It was during his time that in 1627 Jehangir paid his last visit to Kashmir. He had been ailing for some months and had come to the Valley to recoup his health. When the summer was nearly over he was advised to move down to the warmer plains of India. Reluctantly he

accepted the advice, but on reaching Behramgala the disease took a serious turn and on 7 November, 1627 he breathed his last. While on his deathbed he had expressed the wish that his body be carried back to Verinag and buried there. But it was not thought expedient and instead he was buried at Lahore. The poet has feelingly rendered the scene in the following Persian stanza:

*Az Shah-i-Jehangir dame naz'a chu justand  
Ba khwahish-i-dil guft ki Kashmir digar hich.*

When at the time of death Jehangir was asked what he desired,  
With the desire of heart he replied — "Kashmir and nothing else."

### Shah Jehan

Jehangir was succeeded by his son, Shah Jehan, who ruled from 1627 to 1658. The emperor took a greater interest in the welfare of Kashmir than his father. He paid several visits to the Valley and the beauty of Kashmir's lakes and rivers, its mountain meadows and springs fascinated him. He developed a soft corner in his heart for the inhabitants of the Happy Valley and looked after them with loving care. A great builder as he was, he has left his memory in the several gardens, mosques and *serais* which were built under his directions in Kashmir.

Under Shah Jehan Kashmir was ruled by nine governors in succession. Some of them are still remembered as embodiments of justice and good government. The services rendered by Subhedars like Zaffar Khan, Ali Mardan Khan and Lashkar Khan to their master, the emperor, and to the people of Kashmir have been appreciatively recorded by contemporary historians.

Itqad Khan, the last governor of Jehangir continued to hold office for a further period of six years after the accession of Shah Jehan to the throne. A near relation of Nur Jehan, he had, during the time of Jehangir, indulged with impunity in tyrannical rule and levied iniquitous taxes on several commodities and particular communities. The people were harassed by him. *Begar* or forced labour was levied for the collection of saffron. Nor could he calm down the disgruntled elements among the Chaks who raised a rebellion. It was put down with a strong hand and some of the rebels who escaped death fled to Baltistan where they were given protection by the ruler of that principality.

It would be convenient to enumerate here some of the misdoings of the Subhedar to appreciate the benevolent activities of his successors.

The farmers of villages round about Pampore were forced to collect the saffron harvest (a monopoly of the State) without the payment of wages. A surcharge of four *dams* was levied on each *Kharwar* of rice collected in revenue. It became customary with villages where revenue exceeded 400 *Kharwar* of rice to give two fat sheep to the local officials or 60 *dams* in cash in lieu thereof. Similarly Itqad Khan changed the age-old custom of realising land revenue in kind and instead demanded its payment in cash at an enhanced rate. The boatmen who used to pay from early times a special tax of 60 *dams* on every young person, 36 *dams* on a boy and 12 *dams* on an old man, were charged to pay 75 *dams* irrespective of the age of the person taxed. Other commodities did not escape taxation in one form or the other. For example, the country had fruits of various kinds in abundance and the fruit trade was brisk. But the owners of orchards were reduced to great distress, the Subhedar appointing his own men to pick the fruit and sell it at their own price. The owners thereupon started cutting down the fruit trees, preferring to keep the land uncultivated rather than yield its fruit to the unscrupulous governor.

Shah Jehan ultimately removed the cruel Subhedar and replaced him by a better man, Zaffar Khan Ahsan. The new governor, was a brave soldier, an accomplished diplomat and a distinguished poet and author. Several of his poetic compositions are in praise of the beauty of Kashmir. Possessed of polished manners and administrative ability, he quickly won the confidence of the people. He at once reported to the emperor their sad plight and recommended the immediate redress of their grievances. Shah Jehan forthwith ordered the abolition of cruel exactions which went a long way to improving the living conditions of the people. They were relieved of *begar* at the time of saffron harvest. The customary tax levied on each *Kharwar* of rice for fuel was also abolished. Villagers had not from then on to pay any perquisites to the persons in authority. Regarding the tax levied on the boatmen, the former practice which had been in vogue long before Itqad Khan's enhancement was to be followed. No Subhedar was to grab the fruit grown in private orchards. Any infringement of these orders, so went the royal proclamation, would bring down the wrath of God and of the emperor upon the wrong-doer.

Under Shah Jehan's orders, Zaffar Khan undertook the reduction of Baltistan to vassalage. The Mughal army which had to fight against odds — the snow and slush and the precipitous mountain passes — suffered serious losses in officers, men and supplies. But ultimately they carried the day. Baltistan was subjugated and Abdal Rai the ruler of the territory was forced to pay a heavy war indemnity amounting to a million

rupees.

Zaffar Khan laid out several gardens in Kashmir, the better known being "Gulshan" at Buta Kadal quarter of Srinagar and "Hassanabad" on the banks of the Dal canal. Kashmir is grateful to him for having improved the quality and taste of the cherry, plum, peach and grapes by introducing better grafts and saplings from Persia and Kabul.

It appears that the Shia-Sunni conflicts had not died down even with the advent of Mughal rule in Kashmir. For, there was a serious outbreak of rioting among the Sunnis and Shias during Zaffar Khan's governorship. To suppress it Zaffar Khan took strong measures and deported the leader of the Sunnis to Agra.

Shah Jehan visited Kashmir twice during Zaffar Khan's governorship — in 1634 and 1638. During the latter visit unprecedented floods devastated a large part of the city of Srinagar and several low-lying villages. The ripened crop was destroyed with the result that a severe famine took the beautiful land in its deadly grip. Thousands of people perished. Shah Jehan organised relief by sending grain from the Punjab and distributing it among the starving people.

Zaffar Khan was replaced by Shah Jehan's younger son Prince Murad. He remained in charge of Kashmir for only a year. Accustomed to leading a life of luxury, the prince neglected the administration of the land and indulged in the pleasures of life. He had earlier married a daughter of the Maliks of the southern district of the Valley, and taking undue advantage of their relation with the prince, they ravaged the land by loot and undue exactions from farmers. When the news of the sad condition of the people under Murad reached the emperor he recalled him to Agra and appointed Ali Mardan Khan in his place.

Ali Mardan Khan, originally an Iranian, is said to have come by a huge treasure when he was governor of Kandhar and not willing to surrender it to the Shah of Iran, came to India and sought service and protection at Shah Jehan's court.

To him goes the credit of laying out a number of gardens, the chief among which is that of Chashma Shahi near Srinagar. He built a network of roads in the Valley with long rows of poplars planted on either side. Nearly all the *serais* on the great Mughal road over the Pir Panjal pass were built by him. He was tolerant and appointed Pandit Mahadev as his chief adviser.

Another severe famine took a heavy toll of life in 1646 when

Tarbiat Khan was the governor. Thousands of people perished and thousands migrated to the Punjab. Shah Jehan despatched huge quantities of grain from Sialkot, Lahore and Gujarat. Yet another famine due to drought caught the unfortunate Valley in its grip during Shah Jehan's fourth and last visit in 1651. He cut short his visit spending only two months in the Valley. Leaving behind an efficient officer, Nawab Said Ullah Khan, to organise relief to the famine-stricken people, he personally supervised the despatch of grains from the Punjab to the distressed Valley. It was only during the time of Shah Jehan's last governor, Lashkar Khan (1657-59) that a measure of prosperity and happiness returned to the Valley.

Shah Jehan stands out as an eminent builder among the Mughal emperors. His monumental constructions like the Taj and Fort in Agra, The Red Fort in Delhi, etc, testify to his architectural taste. In Kashmir too, the emperor has left some specimens of his constructional work. The pavilion and the garden at Chashma Shahi, the upper portion of the Shalimar Bagh on the Dal, with its beautiful pavilion and scheme of fountains, remind one of the grandeur and refined taste of the architect-emperor of India. Pari Mahal, also called Kuntaloon, high up on a spur of the Zebwan hill on the Dal Lake, is presumed to have been built by Dara Shikoh to house his school of Sufism and an observatory. The calm and refreshing atmosphere about the place and the view of the lake and the Valley it commands, testify to the highly developed aesthetic sense of the Mughals.

Under the impetus of Mughal building activities the Kashmiri workmen developed remarkable skill in the building art and we find several workmen from Kashmir engaged on the construction of the Taj and laying out of Mughal gardens in the rest of India. Kashmiri architecture of the Mughal times was a synthesis of several art impulses—Hindu, Buddhist, Sasanian and Persian. The Jama Masjid in Srinagar which was destroyed by fire twice and rebuilt first by Jehangir and later by Aurangzeb is a typical example of Indo-Saracenic style of architecture.

### Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb came to the throne of his father Shah Jehan in the year 1658. The war of succession in which Aurangzeb played a diplomatic and dominating role ended with the imprisonment by him of his father and defeat and death of his brothers. The mighty Mughal empire founded by Babar and consolidated by Akbar and his two successors, witnessed with the accession of Aurangzeb to the imperial throne, the beginning of

its end, result no doubt of the emperor's unwise policy of communal discrimination. This was in direct opposition to the policy of his illustrious predecessors who had brought all the communities nearer to one another by fostering the spirit of mutual amity and goodwill. Akbar respected the sentiments of his Hindu subjects and even shared with them some of the views on religion as an enlightened and emancipated monarch would do. No wonder the Hindus formed the bulwark of his empire. Aurangzeb was by nature a puritan and conservative in outlook. Times had changed and already a closer contact among the various religious communities was discernable. But Aurangzeb does not seem to have realised change and followed a policy of religious persecution.

Short of this, Aurangzeb possessed several sterling qualities of a good administrator. He carried out his duties conscientiously, was strictly just and honest. He was vigilant and put down corruption with a severe hand. He personally supervised the working of courts of justice. With regard to public money he was scrupulously honest. He led a pious, almost an ascetic's life with austere habits in food and dress.

Aurangzeb visited Kashmir only once, in 1665. He was accompanied by his daughter Roshanara. An interesting account of the emperor's journey to Kashmir has been given by Francois Bernier, a French physician in the employ of Danishmand Khan, a courtier.

The journey was rendered hazardous and troublesome by the precipitous mountain passes which lead to Kashmir. Several persons along with the animals they rode on were killed on the way and many were injured.

Aurangzeb considered a visit to Kashmir sheer luxury and the cause of great hardship to the poor Kashmiris who had to supply labour for the transport of baggage and supplies for the emperor and his large retinue. It was thus the first and the only visit of the emperor to the Valley. He utilised this opportunity in setting up a clean and efficient administration and personally inspected various departments at work.

During the 49 years of Aurangzeb reign, Kashmir was administered by no less than 14 governors sent from Delhi. Most of them were broad-minded and efficient. They dispensed justice and carried on the administration well. As usual they laid out gardens, built mosques and inns. Saif Khan (1664-67, 1668-71), for instance, built the Safa Kadal, the seventh bridge in Srinagar and his adviser, Chaudhri Mahesh, laid out a vast garden with numerous terraces, fountains and cascades on the slopes of the hill at Ishabar. He settled several villages resulting in an increase in

agricultural produce. Among the Subhedars under whose rule the people were happy and peaceful may be mentioned Itmad Khan (1659-62), Hafizullah Khan (1686-90) and Fazal Khan (1698-1701). In times of unforeseen calamities like famines, floods and fires, they gave succour and relief to the suffering people.

There were, however, some exceptions. Iftikar Khan (1671-75) tyrannised over the Brahmins to such an extent that they approached Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, at Anandpur in the Punjab and solicited his personal intervention with the emperor. This ultimately led to the Guru's martyrdom, and the conversion of the Sikh Community into the fighting Khalsah under his son, Guru Gobind Singh. Similarly Muzaffar Khan (1690-92) and Abul Nassar Khan (1692-98), sons of Shaista Khan, let loose a reign of terror over the people. And when Aurangzeb came to know of their maladministration, he forthwith removed them from office and sent better and trusted people to replace them. Similar was the case with Ibrahim Khan (1678-86) who though in the beginning of his governorship succeeded in giving peaceful and clean administration to the province, could not effectively cope with a serious out break of rioting among the Sunnis and Shias.

In bold contrast to the inefficient and cruel administration of these governors was the rule of Fazal Khan (1698-1701). He abolished several vexatious taxes and removed the restrictions imposed on the people by Muzaffar Khan. Several monasteries were repaired and some new ones built.

The people in general were happy and peaceful. They made great progress in their chosen pursuits of life. Kashmiris were good poets and scholars, skilful artists and craftsmen. Shawl trade was brisk and formed an important item of the country's economy. Bernier gives a graphic description of the actual conditions of the people during Aurangzeb's time:

"The Kachemirys are celebrated for wit, and considered much more intelligent than the Indians. In poetry and the sciences they are not inferior to the Persians. They are also very active and industrious. The workmanship and beauty of their *palkeys*, bedsteads, inkstands, boxes, spoons, and various other things are quite remarkable, and articles of their manufacture are in use in every part of the Indies. They perfectly understand the art of varnishing, and are eminently skilful in closely imitating the beautiful veins of a certain

wood, by inlaying with gold threads so delicately wrought that I never saw anything more elegant or perfect. But what may be considered peculiar to *Kachemire*, and the staple commodity, that which peculiarly promotes the trade of the country and fills it with wealth, is the prodigious quantity of shawls which they manufacture, and which gives occupation to the little children....."

### Bahadur Shah

Aurangzeb's death in 1707 was the signal for a short and sharp contest for the throne among his three sons -Muazzam, Azam and Kam Baksh. His eldest surviving son Muazzam held the viceroyalty of the Punjab and north-west frontier province of Kabul. Learning of his father's death while stationed at Jamrud, he at once started for Agra. Having foreseen a clash with his brothers he had been making secret preparations to meet the threat and was thus able to move down to Lahore with a strong army in a few weeks. Twentyfour miles north of Lahore he crowned himself emperor with the title of Bahadur Shah.

In the meantime Bahadur Shah's second son, Azim-ush-shan, who was the viceroy of Bengal and Bihar hearing of his grandfather's death moved to Agra with a huge treasure and a well-equipped army, and fearing a combined onslaught of Bahadur Shah and his son, the Commandant of the Agra Fort capitulated, thus the new emperor, Bahadur Shah, became the undisputed ruler of northern India.

Aurangzeb's second surviving son, Azam Shah, who was the viceroy of the Deccan, hastened to the dead father's camp at Ahmednagar and ascended the throne there. At that time, however, the salaries of his soldiers were in arrears for three years and he could, therefore, make no effective move, till his son, Bidar Bakht, massed a strong force at Gwalior. When finally the combined armies of Azam and Bidar made a move, it appeared that Bahadur Shah would have to face a strong contestant to the throne. The two opposing armies clashed near Samogharh on 15 June 1707. Bidar Bakht had some initial successes, but hampered by a confused medley of baggage, transport, cattle and followers, blinded by dust, dying of heat, thirst and a sandstorm blowing in their faces, his and his father's armies dispersed without any order in their ranks. They were slaughtered helplessly; Bidar Bakht himself was shot dead and his brother, Wallah Jah, mortally wounded. Azam was killed and most of his officers and the remnant of his army broke and fled.

Freed from his most formidable rival, Bahadur Shah lived in peace for a few years, till his youngest brother, Kam Baksh, raised a rebellion in the Deccan, crowning himself king at Bijapur. Some conquests were made by his agents but he lost the support of nobles and military commanders by his acts of insane cruelty. And when Bahadur Shah moved with a strong force to the Deccan, most of the followers of Kam Baksh deserted, and joined him. On 16 January 1709 Kam Baksh's small force was overwhelmed by the imperial troops and the prince mortally wounded some four miles outside Hyderabad.

#### *Communications with Delhi disrupted*

Though Bahadur Shah had now no rival to the throne from his own brothers, the empire was in the process of disintegration. His reign of over five years is marked by incessant rebellions, disturbances and invasions. The Rajputs on whom Aurangzeb had made an attack were inflicting deep and draining wounds on the decaying empire. Ajit Singh recovered his ancestral capital, Jodhpur, immediately after Aurangzeb's death, and Bahadur Shah had to send an expedition against him. Though the rebel did ultimately submit, yet in the succeeding period of disturbances, the Rajputs rose again in arms.

In the Punjab, the Sikh revolt assumed such a character that it threatened to repeat in the north the disruptive work of the Maratha rising of the South, and totally destroy Mughal peace. Banda Bairagi mustered a strong force of 40,000 armed Sikhs around him, sacked the town of Sadhaura (near Ambala) and gained his crowning victory by defeating and slaying Vazir Khan, the commandant of Sirhind, and plundering his camp. Bands of Sikhs crossed into the Jullundur Duab, and penetrated as far as Saharanpur occupying half the district. In the meantime, emboldened by the defeat of Vazir Khan, the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar, resolved to attack Lahore. They ravaged many villages and reached the suburbs of Lahore, though the city itself escaped. Desultory fighting continued, the Sikhs being predominant on the whole, and the north-western road from Delhi was effectively closed. The crisis drew Bahadur Shah to the scene and in the battle of Lohgarh the Sikhs lost heavily and Banda escaped with his life to the hills. Next year (1711) he came down to the plains and raised fresh disturbances. But he was again defeated and driven to the hills of Jammu. Desultory fighting with the Sikhs continued till the death of Bahadur Shah in 1712 when Banda taking advantage of the war of succession recovered Sadhaura and restored the fortifications of Lohgarh, so that all the work of Bahadur Shah was undone.

After the campaign against Banda, Bahadur Shah moved to Lahore. He was planning a visit to Kashmir, but with declining health he fell ill and passed away on 27 February 1712.

Bahadur Shah had a mild and calm temper, great dignity of behaviour and a generous disposition. On his accession, his own weak position coupled with advanced age, prevented him from asserting his will in any matter. He tried to please all but in the attempt succeeded in pleasing none.

#### *Rule by Proxy*

Owing to the disturbed conditions all over the country and particularly in north India the communications between Kashmir and the Imperial Court at Agra were often disrupted. It was not, therefore, possible for Bahadur Shah's first governor of Kashmir, Jaafar Khan to assume his duties for some time. The nobles who were assigned the governorship of distant Kashmir in the time of Bahadur Shah and later Mughal emperors, were reluctant to proceed to Kashmir at once, fearing their eclipse due to the rapidly changing fortunes at the Centre. Consequently there grew up a pernicious system of their appointing deputies to rule Kashmir on their behalf. The well-being of the province thus suffered terribly, as the deputies of the governor busied themselves in making the best of the time and squeezing the last penny out of the cultivator and the trader. The people had no means of seeking redress of their grievances, the nominal governor and the emperor, being throughout busy with their own affairs at Agra.

It is not, therefore, surprising that Jaafar Khan and his agent Abdullah Dehbedi indulged in the worst type of rule and made unjust and cruel exactions from the people. Jaafar Khan passed his days in drink and debauchery and entirely neglected the administration of the province. Ultimately the people, whose patience had reached the limit of endurance, rose in revolt and set fire to the residences of the deputy and other high officials. Fortunately for the people, Jaafar Khan who had contracted a serious illness passed away after an ignoble rule of a year and quarter.

Till the arrival of his successor in 1709, Arif Khan was installed as the acting governor. It was in his reign that Qazi Haider known as Qazi Khan a learned Kashmiri who rose to be the supreme judge at Aurangzeb's court died in Agra. His dead body was brought to Kashmir and was buried with honours in the Qazi's garden at Bachhpura near Srinagar.



Bahadur Shah nominated Ibrahim Khan to the governorship of Kashmir. Like his father, Ali Mardan Khan, Ibrahim had won laurels in the battles fought for the emperor at Ahmedabad, Kabul and Peshawar. Previously during the reign of Aurangzeb he had held with success the governorship of Kashmir three times — 1662-63, 1678-86, 1701-06 — and Bahadur Shah in order to wipe off the opposition to the Mughal rule raised by the action of the ill-fated Jaafar Khan, considered Ibrahim as the best man for the job. But no sooner had Ibrahim reached Srinagar than he fell ill and passed away after a rule of only three months.

Again Arif Khan became the acting governor. Bahadur Shah assigned the governorship to Nawazish Khan, who had been Aurangzeb's last governor of Kashmir and whom the new emperor had recalled at his accession. But Nawazish Khan fearing a reversal of fortune at the imperial court did not proceed personally to Kashmir and allowed Arif Khan to act on his behalf. The latter conducted the administration honestly which won for him the title of Amanat Khan. During the brief period of one and a half year of Nawazish Khan's nominal governorship, Kashmir suffered terribly from floods. A conflagration destroyed several thousand houses in Srinagar.

Bahadur Shah's next Governor, Inayat Ullah (1711-12), also did not rule personally, but asked Arif Khan (now known as Amanat Khan) to carry on with the administration of the province. Inayat Ullah was a Kashmiri by birth and claimed Qazi Musa as his ancestor. He rose to high position under Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah. His mother Mariam Bibi was a teacher of princess Zeb-un-nissa. Amanat Khan died after only nine months of the new governor's nominal rule and Inayat Ullah appointed his son-in-law, Musharaf Khan, as his agent to conduct the administration of Kashmir.

#### Jahandar Shah

On Bahadur Shah's death in 1712 his successor, Jahandar Shah, continued with Inayat Ullah and Musharaf Khan as the governor and agent of Kashmir respectively. In 1712, however, Inayat Ullah took over the governorship personally in order to subdue the Bomba leader Muzaffar Khan of the Jhelum valley below Baramula, who had raised a rebellion and occupied Drava and Karnah districts of Kashmir. While Inayat Ullah was engaged in the campaign, Jahandar Shah lost his throne and his successor, Farrukh-Siyar, recalled him to Agra.

Bahadur Shah's death and the war of succession among his four sons, weakened the empire further and the hold of the insurgent elements on north, south and central India became firmer. Consequently the emperors could not effectively administer a distant province like Kashmir, difficult of access and liable to attacks from ferocious hill tribes surrounding the Valley.

When, therefore, Jahandar Shah, the eldest son of Bahadur Shah, ascended the throne with the help and advice of his able minister Zulfikar Khan and after fighting a series of bloody battles, the governorship of Kashmir had lost its importance and charm for the aspiring courtiers, and Jahandar had to continue with the arrangement of his father during his brief rule of nine months.

Jahandar Shah's cruelty in disposing of his rivals and other princes of the royal household, coupled with his low moral character, cost him his life and throne. Farrukh-Siyar, the second son of his younger brother, Azim-ush-shan, with the help of the powerful nobles, the Sayyid brothers, led an army against him. He had to seek the shelter of the rival of the Sayyid brothers, Asaf-ud-daula. The latter behaved treacherously and with false promises of support, made him a prisoner and informed Farrukh-Siyar who ordered his execution.

With Farrukh-Siyar's accession, Inayat Ullah's governorship of Kashmir came to an end and so did his campaign against Muzaffar Khan the Bomba leader. The latter thus entrenched himself in the hilly regions to the west and north-west of the Valley and threw off his allegiance to the Mughal emperors.

#### Farrukh-Siyar

Farrukh-Siyar, who succeeded in capturing the throne with the help of the powerful Sayyids was not slow to recognise their services to him. He appointed Sayyid Abdullah as minister and Sayyid Hussain Ali as the first paymaster. But the new emperor had a host of personal favourites whose leader Mir Jumla was ever influencing the emperor behind the back of the ministers and thus thwarting their work of day-to-day administration. Ultimately they succeeded in creating bad blood between the king and the Sayyid brothers. Another disrupting element was the rivalry between two groups of nobles — the Turanis who came from Central Asia and enjoyed high favour and influence with the Mughal emperors, and the Iranis whose home was Persia and Khorasan, and



who were singularly gifted especially in revenue and secretarial work. Though the earlier strong emperors kept these groups under control, their rivalry became the predominant characteristic of Indian history under the weak later Mughals and one of the causes of the downfall of their empire.

Farrukh-Siyar who was thoughtless, fickle and weak, devoid of constancy and fidelity, spent most of his time and energy in overthrowing the Sayyid brothers. He raised to power as a counterpoise to them an older noble, Inayat Ullah Kashmiri, who had been disgraced at the beginning of his reign by being dismissed from the governorship of Kashmir, but who now received the rank of 4,000 and was made imperial revenue minister. He tried to purge the administration of the abuses that had crept into it. But his reimposition of the poll-tax and attempts to resume some land grants of the nobles, raised a host of enemies in that corrupt court. The appointment of another Kashmiri officer, Muhammad Murad, as the superintendent of the imperial harem and raising him to the rank of 7,000 with the title of Itqad Khan, embittered further the relations between the emperor and his Sayyid ministers. The excessive favour shown to Murad alienated most of the former adherents of the emperor. This resulted in the central administration of the empire becoming more and more confused and weak, and the provinces falling into greater neglect than before.

#### *Decay of the Empire*

There were uprisings and rebellions all over the country. In the Punjab, Banda Bairagi was active with his headquarters at Sadhaura. It was after a long campaign that Farrukh-Siyar's governor of Lahore, Abdul Samad Khan, crushed Banda's opposition by defeating his forces. Banda was captured and finally executed. But no sooner had the trouble subsided in the Punjab than it shot up in another quarter. Jat peasantry of the region round Bharatpur were up in arms under Churaman and with their depredations made the roads unsafe. The emperor despatched a force with Raja Jai Singh in command. He invested Churaman's new fort of Thun hoping thus to secure his submission. The siege dragged on for twenty months after which Churaman opened negotiations over the head of Jai Singh, agreeing to pay a tribute of five million rupees. The siege was lifted and Churaman remained the master of the territories round Bharatpur.

As if these disturbances were not enough, there broke out open hostility between Farrukh-Siyar and the Sayyid brothers, who were

smarting under the indignities shown to them by the emperor in bestowing favours and riches on their rivals like Itqad Khan and Mir Jumla. The younger Sayyid, Hussain Ali, the viceroy of the Deccan, came to Delhi at the head of a huge army of 35,000 horse and foot to seat the alleged son of Muhammad Akbar (fourth son of Aurangzeb) on the throne. In the meantime Sayyid Abdullah, the minister, entered the palace and with the help of his personal adherents occupied the gates and other chambers of the fort palace. On the arrival of Hussain Ali, Farrukh-Siyar who had hid himself in the harem was dragged out, blinded and kept in prison for two months and then strangled to death (April, 1719). Rafi-ud-Darajat (a son of Rafi-ush-Shan) was now proclaimed emperor, but being a consumptive was deposed after only three months when the Sayyids installed his elder brother, Rafi-ud-daula, on the throne. Rafi-ud-daula was a very sickly youth and died after a few months rule. The Sayyids, who had been already looking out for his successor, crowned the son of Jahan Shah (the fourth son of Bahadur Shah), under the title of Muhammad Shah in September 1719.

In such uncertain times when the fortunes of the emperors and courtiers were changing rapidly at the Centre, the political and economic condition of a distant province like Kashmir can well be imagined than described. No wonder the governors who were appointed by the emperors were reluctant to proceed to Kashmir and instead appointed deputies to carry on the administration on their behalf.

#### *Bomba and Gujjar revolt*

Under Farrukh-Siyar Kashmir witnessed the administration of his two governors — Inayat Ullah Khan and Saadat Khan. The former had been the last governor during the reigns of Bahadur Shah and his successor Jahandar Shah, and on Farrukh-Siyar's accession to the throne in 1713, was engaged in suppressing the revolt raised by the Bomba tribe of the Jhelum valley below Baramulla under their leader, Muzaffar Khan. On the advice of his personal favourites and the Sayyid brothers, Farrukh-Siyar recalled Inayat Ullah from Kashmir and appointed Saadat Khan in his place.

Saadat Khan never visited the province personally but in the three short years of his tenure of office appointed no less than four deputies to rule over Kashmir on his behalf.

The first, Ali Muhammad Khan who took over early in 1713 spent his two years as the deputy-governor in putting down the revolt raised

by Muzaffar Khan. After Inayat Ullah's departure, the Bomba leader had extended his activities to the northern region of the valley also. On his death his son, Haibat Khan, continued his resistance to the Mughal forces but had ultimately to submit and surrender his son as a hostage. The Raja of Poonch, Abdul Razak Gujjar, who had raised a rebellion was also defeated and after paying a large sum in tribute was restored to his principality. All these campaigns strained the resources of the governor. Ali Muhammad Khan, to meet the demands of the troops, resorted to heavy taxation of the people. This was brought to the notice of Saadat Khan who recalled him and appointed Azam Khan in his place. The latter's rule of 11 months gave peace to the Valley. Ali Muhammad Khan, who had by now grown wiser was reappointed for a year after which Saadat Khan sent a fresh deputy in Ehtram Khan who was destined to occupy the chair of his office for only a few days, the governor himself being replaced by orders of the emperor by Inayat Ullah Khan, who had regained the emperor's confidence and favour.

This time Inayat Ullah did not leave the capital of the emperors and placed Mir Ahmad Khan to deputise for him in Kashmir. The latter soon won the confidence of the people by a just and benevolent administration. During the subsequent reigns of emperors Rafi-ud-Darajat and Rafi-ud-Daulah and the first few months of Muhammad Shah, Inayat Ullah continued to be the nominal governor with Mir Ahmad Khan as his deputy.

#### *Religious persecution*

In common with the troubled state of affairs all over the Mughal empire, Kashmir also witnessed the outbreak of the worst kind of religious fanaticism. In 1720 when the affairs at the Mughal headquarters were still in a fluid condition, Mullah Abdul Nabi alias Muhta Khan who was the Sheikh-ul-Islam of Kashmir, in order to extend his authority, gave instructions to the deputy-governor, Mir Ahmad Khan, for certain insensate destructive measures against the Hindus. But the goodnatured deputy did not oblige him. Muhta Khan then instigated his followers to plunder and set fire to the houses of the Hindus, and assumed the duties of the governor under the title of Dindar Khan. With his limited resources Mir Ahmad Khan was unable to assert his authority and applied to his master Inayat Ullah to despatch a strong detachment of soldiers from Delhi. The governor replaced Mir Ahmad and sent Momin Khan to Kashmir at the head of a small force of Mughal soldiers. He took some months to arrive and in the meantime Muhta Khan was assassinated by

one Sayyid Azhar Khan (whose office of tax collector was usurped by him) in a Shia's house with the result that the Shia community shared the same fate as Hindus at the hands of Muhta Khan's followers. Momin Khan like his predecessor finding it difficult to control the situation confirmed Muhta Khan's son, Mulla Sharaf-ud-din, as his successor to the office of Sheikh-ul-Islam, in order to gain time to organise his government and army. Sharaf-ud-din, however, followed the same policy of persecution of the Hindus and Shias as his father. There was lawlessness and chaos in the land. Finally the emperor Muhammad Shah, dismissed Inayat Ullah from the governorship of Kashmir, appointing in his place Abdul Samad Khan Saif-ud-Daula. Taking with him a large force from Lahore Abdul Samad Khan entered Kashmir in 1722 and immediately put Sharaf-ud-din to death. In one excursion from Naid Kadal to Khwaja Yarbali in Srinagar, a distance of two miles, he hanged fifty insurgents. He removed all restrictions on Hindus who had been forbidden to wear turbans, to ride or to put on the caste-mark on their foreheads. There was justice again in the land and the Kashmiri bard sang:

*Haka av Samad phutrun zin*

*Na rud kuni Sharaf no rud kuni Din*

Samad (horse) came swiftly. There remained

Neither Sharaf (cardinalship) nor Din (bigotry) anywhere.

#### **Muhammad Shah.**

But this was for only a brief period. During the 29 years of emperor Muhammad Shah's reign, Kashmir became a hotbed of intrigue among imperial, provincial and local dignatories, which resulted in incessant turmoil and bloodshed. Added to local troubles were the raids by the hill tribes of Bombas, Khakhas and Gujjars of Jhelum Valley, Poonch and Hazara. The government of the Subhedars and their deputies had not enough armed forces and finances to punish the rebels and raiders and during the later years of the emperor's rule they themselves became parties to the scramble for power.

All this resulted from the rapid liquidation of the Mughal empire that was taking place during Muhammad Shah's reign. The Jats round Bharatpur, the Marathas in Malwa, Gujarat and Deccan, the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Rajputs in Rajasthan were delivering massive blows on the edifice so laboriously built up by Akbar, Jehangir and Shah Jehan. Nizam-ul-Mulk was practically independent in the Deccan. Bundelkhand

and Bhagelkhand repudiated the authority of the emperor and there were risings in Allahabad, Malwa, and other places illustrative of both the decay of respect for the imperial government and the ineptitude of the imperial officials.

The final blow was dealt by Nadir Shah who after capturing the throne of Persia in 1736, advanced on Ghazni two years later and thence led an armed invasion of India in 1739. Muhammad Shah was too weak to put up any effective resistance and after a sharp and decisive battle at Sonapat, Nadir entered Delhi in triumph on 18 March, 1739. Two days later he ordered a general massacre of its inhabitants and it was only when Muhammad Shah begged him the life of the remaining population that he stopped the terrific carnage.

With an enormous booty in gold, Jewellery, horses and elephants Nadir Shah returned to Persia, leaving behind the bleeding body of the Mughal empire of Hindustan with the last breath on its dying lips. Muhammad Shah lived for six years more to witness the final liquidation of the empire.

#### *Abul Barkat Khan*

Kashmir had its share of lawlessness and chaos during Muhammad Shah's reign. No less than 12 governors were appointed to rule over Kashmir in his regime. They in turn appointed a host of deputies who without any material aid from the Centre, could retain their office on sufferance of the unruly tribes of Bombas, Khakhas, Kishtwaris and Gujjars, as well as the followers of rival nobles and feudatory lords.

The confusing history of the time, however, reveals the personality of a clever deputy Subhedar, Abul Barkat Khan, who first appears on the scene as the deputy of Abdul Samad Khan, the strong governor who restored peace by suppressing the revolt of Sharaf-ud-din. Abdul Barkat could not, however, pull on well with the joint deputy and Abdul Samad removed both, appointing Najib Khan as his deputy (1722 AD). Three years later during which Kashmir had one of the worst famines, Abul Barkat was again appointed as deputy by the new governor, Aqidat Khan. He was removed from office after an inefficient rule of two years. But his successor Aghar Khan's misrule gave him an opportunity to lead a successful revolt by the tyrannised Kashmiris who drove Aghar Khan out of the Valley. The emperor appointed a fresh governor Amir Khan who maintained Abul Barkat as his deputy. After a rule of two years more he was dismissed by Amir Khan, being

succeeded by an inefficient and foolish person, Ehtram Khan. Again he raised a revolt and in a personal combat defeated the new deputy who ran for his life to the plains of India. The governor had no choice but to reappoint Abul Barkat as his deputy.

So for the fourth term (1730-35) Abul Barkat continued to rule Kashmir. It was during this time that Haibat Khan, the Bomba leader, again raised a revolt in the Jhelum valley and entering the Kamraj division indulged in loot and arson. Abul Barkat Khan, who had very few soldiers at his command, failed to suppress the revolt and by offering bribes managed to send away Haibat and his raiders back to their hilly home.

In 1735 emperor Muhammad Shah made a change in the governorship of Kashmir by bestowing it on Dil Dilar Khan who, being unable to go to the province personally, continued with Abul Barkat's deputy governorship. During these two years (1736-38) of his rule there occurred a devastating flood and a severe earthquake resulting in wholesale destruction of crops and houses and fearful loss of life. To add to the miseries of the unfortunate people Haibat Khan again raided the northern district of the Valley. But now Abul Barkat despatched a strong force under a powerful Kashmiri noble — Mir Jaffar Kanth — who not only defeated Haibat but brought the Bomba tribe under complete subjugation.

This was the beginning of the rivalry between Abul Barkat and Mir Jaffar Kanth. Soon there broke out open hostility between their followers and for months Srinagar was turned into a battlefield of the contending leaders. Finally Kanth sought and obtained aid from the Gujjars of Poonch and in a bloody battle defeated Abul Barkat who to save his life had to flee to the Punjab.

When the news of the discomfiture of his deputy reached Dil Dilar Khan, he despatched another Mughal Sirdar, Jalil -ud-din Khan at the head of a strong force to Kashmir. But by then the Valley had fallen a prey to utter lawlessness for which the depredations of Jaffar Kanth were mainly responsible. The new deputy finding it impossible to restore peace resigned his job and the emperor appointed another noble, Fakhr-ul-Daulah to the governorship of Kashmir.

Both the new governor and his deputy failed to suppress the unruly elements and so after a brief term of nine months, the post was offered to Inayat Ullah II, the son of Inayat Ullah Kashmiri who had during the reigns of previous emperors, held it several times with distinction.

Inayat Ullah's choice of his deputy was unfortunate. He was a weakling and when in 1739 Nadir Shah invaded India, the previous governor Fakhr-ul-daulah won him over to his side and getting for himself a royal *firman* from Nadir entered Kashmir as the viceroy of the invader. In fact he struck coins and read the *Khutba* in the name of Nadir Shah. But the people of Kashmir refused to acknowledge the new emperor and on Nadir's return to Persia rose in revolt driving Fakhr-ul-daulah out of Kashmir. Abul Barkat appeared again on the scene and securing the deputy governorship from Inayat Ullah set up his headquarters in Srinagar.

#### *Fall of Abul Barkat*

Abul Barkat now became more ambitious. Realizing that Nadir Shah's invasion had practically destroyed the power of the emperor, he quickly consolidated his position in Kashmir and rose against his master, Inayat Ullah Khan who was twice defeated and forced to hide himself in the city. Abul Barkat declared his independence. Soon, however, Inayat Ullah and his son mustered an army and defeated Abul Barkat. The latter took shelter with the Gujjar ruler of Poonch. Leading a strong force of Gujjars he again attacked Inayat Ullah who was completely defeated and ran for his life to Raja Mahmood Khan, the leader of the Bomba tribe.

The Bombas seized this opportunity and again entered the Valley where they indulged in looting and killing of the people. Ultimately Abul Barkat's men caught hold of Inayat Ullah and treacherously murdered him (1741 AD).

On Inayat's death the emperor appointed another nominal governor, this time Asad Yar Khan, but he was unable to dislodge Abul Barkat, who continued to rule as an independent king. But soon he had trouble with his Gujjar supporters whom he succeeded in driving out with the help of his local followers. Trouble broke out from another quarter. One of his trusted lieutenants raised a revolt and with the help of the Shias attacked Srinagar. Abul Barkat who was ailing from a fell disease instead of crushing the rebels, vented his wrath on the poor Shia community. The rebel leader, Bir Ullah Beg, won over most of the troops of Abul Barkat and thus succeeded in controlling the whole Valley. Abul Barkat was arrested and thrown into prison. This was a signal for general lawlessness. The hill tribes came down upon the helpless Kashmiris and for four months anarchy and chaos ruled supreme.

Ultimately the emperor appointed another governor, Abul Mansur

Safdar Jung (1745-48), who sent Nisar Khan as his deputy with a strong contingent of Mughal forces. The latter acted diplomatically and securing Abul Barkat's release sent him to Delhi to the court of the emperor. He won over the rebel Bir Ullah and appointed him to a responsible post. Within a short period of six months normal conditions were restored in the war-torn land of Kashmir.

Abul Barkat Khan was destined to live only for a few months more. A versatile man, fond of literature and poetry, he was a clever politician and an army leader. For over 25 years he dominated the political scene in Kashmir, at a time when the fortunes of both the Mughal empire and Kashmir stood at cross-roads. Ambitious by nature, he did not hesitate to adopt mean intrigue to advance his interests, and overlooked the lapses of his subordinates so long as they proved useful to him. But though he maintained a semblance of government during a period of uncertainty and alarm, his intrigues and frequent campaigns were a source of misery and penury to the harassed people.

#### *The great famine*

It appears that the Fates were dead-set against the people of Kashmir at this period, as during 1746-47 there occurred a flood which washed off the ripened crops. The loss was all the more unfortunate because the reserve food stocks had been exhausted during the preceding years of political upheavals and chaotic administration. The result was a severe famine which wiped off more than three fourths of the population of the Valley through death, emigration and disease. Dead bodies lay strewn on the ground, unburied and uncremated, to be eaten by vultures. It was a horrible sight to find the famished survivors crawling their way to India and dying like flies due to exhaustion and hunger. Most of the Kashmiris who were fortunate to reach the plains settled permanently there. Some of them went to Delhi and later made a mark both at the Imperial court and with its successors, the British.

#### *Rise of Abdali*

And while the black famine was taking its cruel toll of life in the Valley, an event destined to have far reaching consequences for its inhabitants was taking place in distant Persia. On 2 June 1747, Nadir Shah was assassinated and his empire dissolved. Among his chief commanders was Ahmad Shah Abdali, an Afghan who had risen to high rank in Nadir's service. When Nadir was assassinated Abdali returned to his own country and with the help of his tribe and a force of Qizilbash

horse established himself at Herat, captured Kandahar and expelled from Kabul Nadir Shah's governor of that province. Having thus reduced to obedience the whole of Afghanistan proper, he assumed the royal title.

Ahmad Shah Abdali next crossed the Indus with 30,000 horse and invaded the Punjab and after capturing Lahore pushed on to Delhi. His advance was, however, halted at Sirhind by the army of the Mughal emperor led by the prince Ahmad Shah. A bloody battle ensued, resulting in Abdali's defeat and retreat towards Afghanistan.

### Ahmad Shah

The victorious prince while on his way back to Delhi heard of his father's death at Panipat and on 29 April 1748 he was crowned as the emperor of Hindustan.

But it was an empire only in name. India south of the Narmada and west of the Wainganga and the Godavari was ruled by a prince independent in all but name. The three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were ruled by another independent prince. West of Bengal lay the viceroyalty of Oudh virtually independent under a hereditary ruler and destined to absorb the provinces of Allahabad and Rohilkhand. Malwa formed a part of the dominions of the rising power of Marathas and the same may be said of the richer province of Gujarat. Rajputana stood sullenly aloof from the empire and the Punjab, Multan and Sind lay at the feet of the new Afghan King, Ahmad Shah Abdali. All that remained to Delhi were the northern half of the Gangetic Duab and a strip of territory which only at one point attained the width of a hundred miles. Within this limited area the emperor of India exercised such authority as his ministers were pleased to leave in his hands. The great nobles were entirely selfish, devoid of patriotism and honour and interested only in dividing among themselves the remnant of the dominions of the Great Mughal.

### Anarchy in Kashmir

Devoid of armed might, ill-supplied with troops and ammunitions, the Subhedar of Kashmir, Abul Mansur Safdar Jung, could hardly maintain authority in the province, and his deputy, Afrasiyab Khan, was hard put to it to either render assistance to the famine-stricken people or keep the turbulent nobles under check. The latter opened secret negotiations with Ahmad Shah Abdali and promised all aid to him in a campaign against the nominal Mughal ruler. Accordingly Ahmad Shah sent his

governor of Peshawar, Jahan Khan Bamzai, with a letter for the Mughal governor of Kashmir, requesting permission to visit the Valley of whose beauty he had heard so much. But Abdali never visited Kashmir, his object in sending this mission being only to gain information on the defences of the province.

In 1748 when emperor Muhammad Shah was still alive, Abdali sent a force of Afghans under Asmat Ullah Khan to occupy Kashmir, but though he succeeded in penetrating as far as Srinagar, he could not withstand the onslaught of the forces which Afrasiyab Khan was able to muster. Asmat Ullah was killed and his troops were scattered and annihilated.

With the accession of Ahmad Shah to the throne of Delhi, events in Kashmir took a turn for the worse. There were incessant feuds among the followers of the nobles and the Mughal governors. Afrasiyab Khan continued to hold the chair of deputy governor for nearly five years more (1748-53) when he was killed by poison by an employee who had been purchased by Abdali's governor of Peshawar to commit the heinous act. Complete anarchy followed Afrasiyab's death. He was succeeded by his minor son born of his Kashmiri wife. Malik Hassan Irani, the child's guardian who wanted to usurp all power, got him assassinated after only two months. But Hassan Irani was himself dismissed soon after when the emperor Ahmad Shah appointed a new governor — Alaqli Khan.

But in the meantime political conditions in the Punjab and north western provinces had altered materially. Ahmad Shah Abdali during his third invasion of India in 1751, demanded the cession of the Punjab and Multan. The Mughal governor of the Punjab withstood the invader for four months but had ultimately to yield to the Afghan forces of Abdali. Before the invaders could reach Delhi the pusillanimous emperor Ahmad Shah had purchased safety by a disgraceful treaty which ceded the Punjab and Multan to Afghanistan.

### Afghan invasion and end of Mughal rule

So when Alaqli Khan took over the governorship of Kashmir, he thought it prudent to appoint a Kashmiri, Mir Muqim Kanth, as his deputy. Mir Muqim, finding the treasury empty, adopted measures to effect economy in expenditure, and in this process disbanded a number of troops and cut the salaries of the rest. This created disaffection in the army and seizing the opportunity Abul Qasim Khan the son of Abul Barkat Khan who though a pauper was yet ambitious, won over the armed

forces to his side and driving away Mir Muqim Kanth declared himself the independent ruler of Kashmir. Qasim indulged in insensate cruelty and there was widespread distress in the land.

While Ahmad Shah Abdali after his victorious campaign was back in Lahore, Mir Muqim Kanth and Khwaja Zahir Didamari, the two influential leaders of Kashmir, distressed at the depredations of Qasim, took an impolitic step in inducing Abdali to invade Kashmir and to bring it under his rule. Abdali gladly accepted the invitation and in 1753 sent a strong force of Afghans under Abdullah Khan Ishk Aqasi. Abul Qasim mustered his army at Shopyan, at the foot of the Pir Panjal pass, and dealt heavy blows on the invader. Fighting continued for 15 days, both the sides losing heavily in men and arms. Ultimately Ishk Aqasi won over Abul Qasim's commander, Gul Khan Khaibri, and losing heart Qasim left the field but was arrested and taken to Kabul. Ishk Aqasi entered Srinagar in triumph and planted the Afghan standard on the ramparts of Akbar's fort at Nagar Nagar and thus brought to end the rule of the Mughal emperors in Kashmir.

## 13

## AFGHAN RULE IN KASHMIR

The Mountainous Region on the north-west of the Indian sub-continent contains most of the lowest depressions in the vast Himalayan chain dividing it from the rest of Asia. Aptly called "The Corridor" it has witnessed the passage of numerous peoples — the Aryans, Greeks, Scythians, Turks, Tartars, Mughals and Afghans, to mention only a few — who migrated to the fertile plains of Hindustan from the inhospitable regions of the north. It has been the storm-gap through which passed the ebb and flow of the eternal struggle between the nomadic people of the Central Asian uplands and the settled, opulent and cultured inhabitants of the Plains.

## "The Corridor"

Afghanistan as it is now known to the world, was embraced in the Achaemenian Satrapies in the time of Darius Hystaspes 500 BC. It was through this country (known then as Pasht or Pakht) that Alexander's victorious armies passed into northern India. With the death of Alexander, the break-up of his empire among his generals took place. Bactria became a kingdom under Satrap Philip; Kabul, Ghazni and perhaps Kandahar, another under Starsanor and Sibertius. The quarrelling and fighting among these Satrapies were prolonged and it was not for several years that Seleukos emerged as emperor of the country from the Euphrates to the Oxus and Indus. Seleukos is said to have given to Chandragupta, in consequence of a marriage contract, some part of the country west of the Indus, occupied by an Indian population. Some sixty years later an independent Greek dynasty was established in Bactria. In course of time their power extended over to the Kabul Basin and probably over whole of Afghanistan. But the mass of the people were evidently Hindu or Aryan who, after the rise of Asoka, became Buddhist. These varied Hellenic kings seemed to have been driven forth by the invading

Scythian hordes towards India where they established Hellenic kingdoms on the Indus.

It was during the time of Kaniska that Afghanistan came under the political domination of the Kusans and Buddhism flourished there. There are still numerous traces of the once Buddhist population in this region. A free commercial, political and cultural intercourse with the Indian and Central Asian people during this period resulted in a prosperous and contented people inhabiting this otherwise inhospitable territory. Various barbaric dynasties succeeded one another after the Kusans and there was constant struggle going on for the acquisition of absolute mastery over the land. In the time of Heun Tsiang (630-45 AD) there were both Indian and Turk princes in the Kabul valley and in the succeeding centuries both these races seem to have predominated in succession. Throughout these centuries there existed political and cultural ties between Kashmir and Afghanistan so much so that Kalhana lays the opening scenes of his *Rajatarangini* in the latter country.

It was not till the end of the tenth century that a Hindu prince ceased to reign in Kabul, when it fell into the hands of the Turk, Subaktigin, who had established his capital at Ghazni. There, too, reigned his famous son Mahmud and a series of descendants till the middle of the 12th century. The Ghazni dynasty was succeeded by that of Alau-ud-din of Ghor whose nephew Shihab-ud-din Muhammad repeatedly invaded India.

Afghanistan and its adjacent countries of the north and south were included in Timur's conquests and Kabul at least remained in the possession of one of his descendants till 1501, only three years before it fell into the hands of another and more illustrious one, Sultan Babar. From the time of his conquest of Hindustan as a result of the first battle of Panipat in 1562, Kabul and Kandahar remained a part of the vast Mughal empire.

The relation between Afghanistan and Kashmir remained to some extent curtailed from the attempted invasion of the Valley by Mahmud in 1015 to its annexation by Akbar in 1586 when it was included in the Subha of Kabul. During the Mughal rule there was close contact and commercial and political intercourse between the two sub-divisions of the Subha, and Kashmiris again became familiar with their old neighbours.

But during the long interval of five centuries and more Afghanistan had undergone a metamorphosis in the composition of its population mostly due to the rise of the Mongols and Turks under Genghis Khan and

Timur. No longer were there the old talented artists and craftsmen, no longer were there the cultured, peace-loving and prosperous people. Instead, their place had been taken up by a rough but hardy people of the Turkish and Mongol descent, divided into numerous clans, each fiercer than the other. When not engaged in a war with their neighbours, their propensities to adventure often found vent in clan warfare and personal vendetta, so much so that to them the cutting of a "human head was no more cruel than plucking a flower."

#### *Foundation of Afghanistan*

In the first quarter of the 18th century AD, the power and authority of the Safavi dynasty of Persia touched a low level, and fell from the grasp of a weak and worthless prince into the hands of a band of quarrelsome nobles. But soon a deliverer appeared in the person of Nadir Quli, a Turk who in 1729 expelled the Afghans from Isfahan and Fars and extended the Persian monarchy to its ancient limits. In 1736 he ascended the throne of Persia as Nadir Shah.

Nadir Shah who engulfed the Afghans in his hurricane campaigns against the people of India dealt a deadly blow to the decadent Mughal empire. In order to augment his force he had, however, to depend upon the goodwill of the Afghans whom he enlisted in ever larger numbers in his army. Among a band of Afghan nobles whom he patronised was a young soldier, Ahmad Khan, of the Sadozai family of the Abdali clan, who took service under Nadir. He so distinguished himself by his pluck and dash and his organising capacity, that he rose to the command of the Abdali contingent, 6,000 strong and became the right-hand man of his Chief. At the time of the assassination of Nadir (1747), Ahmad Khan, then a young man of 24, had under his control 10,000, effective horse, and what was even more valuable, the treasure of Nadir Shah, which included the Koh-i-nur. With this treasure and his own personality and powers he was chosen by the Afghan chiefs at Kandahar to be their leader and assumed kingly authority over the eastern part of Nadir's empire, with the style of Duri-Durrani, "Pearl of the Age", after which his clan came to be known as Durrani. With Ahmad Shah, Afghanistan as such first took its place among the kingdoms of the world.

#### *Abdali's Campaigns*

After giving a semblance of orderly government to his subjects, Ahmad Shah undertook the invasion of India. In 1747 he came to Lahore and thus into the heart of the falling Mughal empire. He speedily



conquered Lahore and then hastened towards Delhi. The imperial troops under the command of Prince Ahmad halted his advance near Sirhind and unable to break their lines, Ahmad Shah Abdali retreated to Afghanistan. He repeated his invasion in 1749 but did not advance beyond Lahore, where the governor bought him off by the cession of the revenue of four sub-districts. Retreating to his fastnesses with a rich booty and leaving the administration of his Indian territories in the hands of his lieutenants, Ahmad Shah began to concentrate on new ventures in the direction of Herat, Meshed and Nishapur. In 1751 he again entered India and after a sharp struggle with Muin-ul-Mulk, the governor of the Punjab, Abdali overran the province and proceeded to Delhi. But before he could reach the imperial capital the cowardly emperor Ahmad had purchased safety by a disgraceful treaty which ceded the Punjab and Multan to Afghanistan.

While back at Lahore, he received an invitation from the leaders of Kashmir to rid the kingdom of cruel governors of the decadent Mughal emperors, and bring it directly under his rule. He sent a strong force of Afghans under his lieutenant, Ishk Aqasi on this mission who after overcoming stiff resistance put up by the Mughal forces in Kashmir, annexed the territory to the expanding kingdom of Abdali.

On 2 June 1754, the Mughal emperor Ahmad Shah was deposed and prince Aziz-ud-din, the eldest surviving son of Jahandar Shah, was raised to the throne under the title of Alamgir II. His chief minister Ghazi-ud-din planned to recover the Punjab for the emperor. Abdali's governor of the province, Muin-ul-Mulk, who died in 1753 had been succeeded by his widow Mughlani Begum who had made herself feared. But she was not fitted to govern a large and impoverished province. Ghazi-ud-din led a strong army against her and after arresting her conferred the government of the Punjab on his nominee.

Ahmad Shah Abdali marched on Lahore and after capturing it without firing a single shot, advanced by forced marches on Delhi which he entered on 28 January 1757. He stayed in the city for nearly a month, during which time he sacked it and pillaged the citizens. Returning homewards, he again left the feeble emperor on his ancestral throne putting his 11 year old son, Timur Mirza, in charge of the Punjab.

But meanwhile the Marathas who constituted the most powerful force in India were invited by Adina Beg the governor of Jullundur to occupy the Punjab, promising them large sums of money. Accordingly the Marathas appeared on the scene in 1758, and driving Timur across the

Indus, occupied Lahore. After this easy conquest, Raghunath Rao, the brother of the Peswa and leader of the Maratha forces in the Punjab, appointed Adina Beg governor and himself retired to the Deccan. Shortly after Adina Beg died and a Maratha chief, Sabaji Bhonsle, was nominated to be his successor. By their occupation of the Punjab, the Marathas challenged the powerful Afghan monarch who, however, could not immediately answer it, being engaged in quelling a rebellion raised by the Afghan chief of Baluchistan.

Ahmad Shah Abdali, after forcing the rebellious chief to submission, attacked the Marathas in 1759 compelling them to evacuate Lahore which he occupied. Driving the main body of the Marathas in front of him, Ahmad Shah defeated them some ten miles north of Delhi. Similarly he defeated another Maratha force under Mulhar Rao Holkar and the power of the Marathas was thus temporarily shattered in Northern India.

The Peswa upon hearing of these disasters, prepared a great army under the command of Sadasiv Rao. Marching north, its numbers were swollen by the forces of other Hindu princes and by thousands of irregulars of every sort.

Ahmad Shah Abdali had encamped during the rains of 1760 some thirty miles to the north of Delhi. Here he was joined by the redoubtable forces of the Rohila chief, Shuja-ud-daula.

### *Third Battle of Panipat*

So on 14 January, 1761 the two armies clashed at the battlefield of Panipat. For the first time the Marathas, contrary to their fighting tactics, met the enemy in an open field face to face. After an opening attack of the Maratha artillery, the Afghans made a counter-attack with their infantry. Their charge was, however, nullified by the fierce onslaught of the Maratha cavalry. The battle continued with varying fortunes till the afternoon when Viswa Rao, the Peswa's son and Sadasiv Rao were both killed. The Marathas lost all hope and retreated in disorder. The pursuit by moonlight cost tens of thousands of lives and the Maratha defeat was complete.

But though this great victory enhanced the prestige of Abdali, it did not yield him any material or political gain. His soldiers insisted for returning to their homes. Accordingly after extracting as much money as possible at Delhi, Ahmad Shah Abdali marched back to the highlands of Afghanistan.

But he was not left there in peace for long. Another power was